BAPU'S LETTERS — I

TO ASHRAM SISTERS

THE LETTERS

1

Wardha,
Day of Silence, 6-12-'26

Dear Sisters,

According to my promise, I am writing to you the first thing after my morning breakfast.

At present it is five minutes to seven. So you must be on your way to the prayer-ground. Always be punctual. I take it that all those who promised to attend prayers are attending them, unless it be for reasons beyond their control. I suggested to Ramaniklal that he should explain to you daily a verse or two from the Gita. But you may request him to read to you anything else you like best. Never give up your writing exercises. Always try to improve your handwriting.

But all this does not constitute Dharma — it is an aid to its practice. We get to know what Dharma is from the verses we have been reciting daily. We should learn to practise Dharma. Dharma is benevolence ; and benevolence means desiring and working for the good of others, serving them. Begin

this service by loving one another like sisters, and by sharing one another's grief. But this is one and the same thing. As I intend to write to you every week, I shall stop here.

Dakshabehn, Kamalabehn and Chi.† Rukhi are all well. They travelled third class, but it was not crowded, so they had no difficulty. I was alone in the second. Lakshmidasbhai has thrown himself heart and soul into the activities connected with the spinning wheel. Here, too, recitation of the Gita goes on as there. For the rest, please read my letter to Chi. Purushottama.

Blessings from Bapu

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† In Gujarati, elders, while writing to younger people prefix Chi. (i.e. Chiranjivi — the long-lived one) to their names. — Translator

2

Wardha,
13-12-'26

Dear Sisters,

Today also I am thinking of you after my morning breakfast. It is exactly 6-50, your time for prayers. You may miss all else but not this. It brings us all together, and all of us together with God. It is a real purifying bath. Just as the body becomes dirty without a bath, so also the pure soul appears impure unless the heart is washed with the water of prayer. Therefore, never miss prayers. At four o'clock in the morning you get an opportunity of meeting with all. Not all the women, however, are able to attend that prayer. But at the seven o'clock prayer, they have a chance of meeting together. It is possible for all of them to attend it. Mutual contact among Ashram women is very essential.

The two American ladies that had stayed with you for a day came here. They left yesterday after staying here for three days. They are mother and daughter. The daughter is unmarried and is twenty-five years of age. She teaches a top class in a college of five hundred girls. She has been sent by her Principal to study how moral education is given in different parts of the world. Her mother accompanies her as her guardian. Both of them move about the world fearlessly. How I wish that we had such fearlessness and such devotion to service as this young woman!

Mirabehn's life should set all of you thinking. You must be receiving her Hindi letters. From her letters

to me, I find that she has won the hearts of the Gurukula girls with her simplicity and affectionate nature. She has made herself one with the girls. She has been teaching them carding and spinning very well. She does not fritter away a single moment. I am hoping for such devotion, sacrifice and purity from you. Is it too much to hope that after becoming experts in your work, and pure in heart you will spread yourselves throughout India ? Every moment I realize the great need of women workers. We find many self-sacrificing men. But self-sacrificing women in public work are hardly to be seen. Woman is an embodiment of self-sacrifice. But at present her self-sacrifice is confined to her family. Why should she not make for the nation even greater sacrifices than what she has been making for her family ? In the end, of course, she who is devoted to Dharma, will sacrifice herself for the whole world. But one's country is the first stage in the process. And when the interest of one's country does not run counter to the interests of the world, service in the cause of one's country does take one towards salvation. My request to you this week is that all of you should think seriously over this.

I send this letter to Tarabehn since Manibehn may not be there. But I wish that you should appoint a leader from amongst yourselves.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

3

20-12-'26

Dear Sisters,

I have received Chi. Radha's letter written on behalf of all of you. It is good that you have appointed Gangabehn as your leader. But may I draw your attention to the necessity of your helping her now that you have appointed her as your leader ? By appointing an illiterate sister of yours as your leader you have given due importance to character and sacrifice. This is as it should be. Knowledge is useless without character. Never have any doubt about this.

A leader is the greatest servant. A king gets authority to order only when he has risen to the greatest height of service. His orders would then be, not in his own self-interest, but for the good of the community. Today irreligion parades as religion. Therefore, instead of kings being self-sacrificing, they are interested in their own enjoyment, and issue orders only to that end. But you have appointed Gangabehn as your leader from the point of view of service. This means that all of you have decided to try to become servants and that Gangabehn is the chief servant.

Remember that all of you are tied to Mother India with hand-spun yarn. If you give up spinning, you give up service too. Therefore, never neglect the spinning-wheel. Today God resides in the spinning-wheel. The fire of starvation is raging all around. I do not see any other help against it except through the spinning-wheel. God always reveals Himself to us in some concrete shape. Therefore, we sing about

Draupadi * that for her God took the form of garments. Anyone who desires to see God today may see Him in the form of the spinning-wheel.

I have exceeded my limit of two pages. I cannot meet my other commitments if I become too greedy to write to you. I am sending to Chi. Maganlal Mirabehn's whole letter. I wish all of you would listen to it carefully when it is read. Try to understand and think over it. To me at present she is an ideal woman worker amongst us.

Radha has on your account laid on me the burden of writing to you on good paper with a margin. I shall bear it as far as I can.

I do not write anything regarding my health, since it is very good. Jamnalalji and Janakibehn are sheltering me and giving me plenty of quiet. I appear to have gained four lbs. I am able to eat well. I always eat a little of what Ba prepared for me. I have still some of it left.

I leave this place tomorrow. Mithubehn, Jamnabehn and Perinbehn are coming here for Khadi work. I shall meet them at Gondia. You should find out from the map where Gondia is.

Dakshabehn and the German lady left yesterday — one for Bardoli and the other for Banaras.

Day of Silence Blessings from Bapu

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* The story goes that Draupadi, a woman of great purity, was sought to be dishonoured by her opponents who tried to remove her clothes in the presence of all assembled. But God protected her in her extreme distress so that as the garments were removed they became endless and could not be unwound from her.

4

Gauhati,
Monday, 27-12-'26

Dear Sisters,

Instead of writing to you in the morning as usual, I am writing this just before the mail goes. The mail leaves here early.

The scenery around here is lovely. Our hut is built right on the bank of the Brahmaputra ; Kaka Saheb would love to stay here if only he were to see the hut. There is a thatch of hay by way of roof. The walls are made of pieces of bamboo that grows all round here. The bamboo is plastered with mud. The inside of the wall is covered with blue Khadi. There is no cot inside, but there is an improvised platform — a raised wooden plank with bamboo legs. Over it is spread hay ; on the hay a carpet and on the carpet a Khadi sheet. On this I sit, dine, and sleep. It is big enough to accommodate four more, but no one else sleeps on it. The ground in the hut, too, is spread over with hay, on which is spread a carpet, which again is covered with Khadi. Who would not like to stay in such a hut ? Of course, the life of such a hut is very short. It is useless in the monsoon. But it costs very little, takes only a day or two to build, and no great skill. Such is the case with all true Art. It is always simple and natural.

It is quite damp and cold here, but if one moves about actively one does not get ill.

More next time, whatever comes to my mind at that time.

Blessings from Bapu

5

Sodepur,
3-1-'27

Dear Sisters,

This time I have not yet received your weekly letter. We have shifted today to the new buildings erected on the land purchased by the Khadi Pratishthan. Many small houses have been erected here. The processes of washing, bleaching and dyeing Khaddar with the aid of machines are being carried on here. There was a big gathering here yesterday. The attendance was very good. I thought I should ask for a collection ; I did and collected about Rs 3,500/-.

Prayers are held here just as we hold them there. The verses which they recite are also the same. But these people are worse than we in keeping to tune, and so it jars a little on the ear. But gradually they will improve.

Perinbehn, Mithubehn and Jamnabehn are still here. They are carrying on their Khaddar work. They have sold about half the stock they had brought with them.

It is very good that your prayers are going on regularly. I find that they are also well attended. Do not forget that spinning is *yajna* (sacrifice). The Gita says that he who eats food without offering *yajna*, eats stolen food. *Yajna* means work done for the good of others. For us spinning is such public work.

Blessings from Bapu

6

10-1-'27

Dear Sisters,

I received the letter written by Chi. Radha only yesterday. I find that your seven o'clock prayers are going on regularly and that you are all interested in them. I am glad.

What Kaka Saheb has said is certainly worth bearing in mind. Instead of replying by a mere 'yes' or 'no', we should develop the ability of understanding and explaining the reasons for our reply.

Yesterday was the death-anniversary day of Sharaddhanandji. Pandit Malaviyaji is in Banaras at present. He sent word at the last minute that we should go to the Ganga-ghat for a bath and prayers. I got ready and took with me the students of the Rashtriya Vidyapith that had come to see me. We formed ourselves in twos and started. Malaviyaji joined us and our procession slowly swelled. I have no time for describing the Ganga-ghat. The scene is grand. The ghat is not as clean as I would wish it to be.

After the bath we went to offer our prayers to Kashi Vishvanath. Mahadev would perhaps give you a description of other things there. The German lady was with us. It was doubtful whether she would be allowed to enter. She is a Buddhist and hence can be regarded as a Hindu. How can she be denied admittance? I had decided that if she was refused admittance, I too would not enter. But the priest kept quiet when he was told that she was a Hindu.

How can I describe the dirtiness of the street of the Kashi Vishvanath temple?

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

7

17-1-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have received your letter. I always write to you on Mondays ; but as I go on changing my residence, the day on which you receive my letters may vary. Till now I was south of the Ganga. Yesterday I shifted to its north, and hence had to cross the Ganga. From Patna we crossed over to the other side by means of a boat. A car awaited us there and took us to Sonpur.

Earth here is not sticky like mud ; it has a mixture of sand in it. It, therefore, feels soft like velvet to the feet. Ba and I walked for about a mile. We did not wear our sandals. We liked to walk on the sand. Mother Ganga prepares new soil every year in this part of our land. For hundreds of miles she carries mud and silt with her and depositing them here, she runs away to the sea as though she wanted to avoid feeling embarrassed by being told by someone of the great good she was doing to the land.

Today we are in Rajendra Babu's village. Rajbansi and Devadas are here. Chandramukhi and Vidyavati are at present in Chhapra, the town where he (i.e. Rajendra Babu) lives. We met them in Chhapra. Both are in relatively good health — Chandramukhi slightly worse than in the Ashram and Vidyavati slightly better.

In yesterday's ladies' meeting I started something new. Women here wear heavy silver ornaments ; they keep their children dirty and do not comb the children's hair. I criticized their habit of putting on

ornaments. The result was that some of them gave away their anklets, necklaces etc. to me, and promised that they would neither buy nor put on new ones in future. While doing this, I thought of all of you very much. Ba is rendering me great assistance in this respect ; but that is because she agrees with me in this. You can do work of this kind better than I. But it requires self-sacrifice, enthusiasm and facilities. All this is possible for you there. Do we not sing आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु । that we are to regard all as our own selves ? If we think in that manner, then, on finding somebody's children dirty, we would feel as if our own children were dirty and would feel ashamed ; on finding someone else miserable, we would feel ourselves miserable and begin to look for a way of removing the misery.

But I have exceeded my limit. Much as I like to exceed, I feel nervous on looking at the pile of correspondence lying before me. Find out from a map where Patna, Sonpur, and Chhapra are. This is the land where King Janaka lived.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

With whose permission did Gangabehn Zaveri allow her foot to be sprained ? Well, God's will be done ! If one is not attentive owing to laziness, one deserves to be punished.

Bapu

8

Betia,
24-1-'27

Dear Sisters,

Today we are in Betia. It is the town where I stayed most of the time in 1917 during my Champaran work. There are groves of mango-trees in this area and they are very lovely. There are legends about Rama and Sita connected with almost every place round about. But it is not possible for me to spend time describing all this to you.

I see that your class has been growing. I agree entirely with Kaka Saheb. If the Ashram does not train women workers devoted to service, where else can they be trained? You yourselves have to reply to this question. We may not have sufficient health, ability or knowledge of letters for doing such work. But if we have pure devotion all else will follow. Devotion means faith — faith in God and in one's self. Such faith will lead one to make all sacrifices. Sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice is difficult, but if it is made in the cause of service, it is easy. No mother would sleep in the wet deliberately. But she would gladly do so if she can thereby make her child sleep in a dry place.

I find that this year I shall not be able to live in the Ashram for a long time. I am sorry for this. But we should find happiness even in adversity. I shall have to wander about in the interests of Khadi. Only thus can I carry Khaddar to millions of our people.

Blessings from Bapu

9

31-1-'27

Sadakat Ashram, Patna

Dear Sisters,

Monday has once more arrived. This time I have not yet received your letter. Today we are in Patna. It is very quiet here. The Vidyapith, so dear to Rajendra Babu, is located here. It is situated in the fields on the bank of the Ganga. There are no other buildings around. The scene is good on the whole. Owing to the annual function of the Vidyapith, teachers and boys have come from various places. All the Ashram buildings are, therefore, full.

I am going to add to your work and to that of the Ashram. The women-folk of the men-workers here are more helpless than our women. Some of them are desirous of coming there for a short time. I do not intend to prevent them. On the contrary I am encouraging them to go. I am sure that if some of them came there, you would welcome them, and shoulder the responsibility. The idea in sending them there is that they may acquire a little knowledge and learn spinning and carding. It is my hope that on their return they will work among the women here.

If any of you have anything to suggest in this matter, certainly do so. Check me if I am in too great a hurry. One who is in distress does not stop to weigh and consider. Regard me as such. I cannot bear to see the helpless state of these women. We, too, are somewhat helpless there ; but these people here are even more so.

Blessings from Bapu

10

Akola,
7-2-'27

Dear Sisters,

Today I am observing my day of silence in the midst of the members of our Ashram family. Kishorlalbhai, Gomatibehn, Nathaji, Tulsimehar, and Tara — are not all these to be regarded as belonging to our Ashram? And who could regard Nanabhai, his wife and Sushila as outsiders? So this week do not expect me to write anything except about them.

Gomatibehn is still having low fever, and is confined to bed. But she is cheerful; no one could say from her face that she was suffering from a long and serious illness. The reason for this cheerfulness is her faith. May we all have such faith!

Kishorlalbhai is getting on as usual. It cannot be said that he has acquired more strength. He, too, had fever and shivering last night. The fever lasted for a short time, and subsided.

Whenever there is illness among the dear ones, Nathaji cannot but be in their midst.

Nanabhai is a permanent invalid. He is down with asthma but his face shows great calmness.

Day of Silence   Blessings from Bapu

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11

Dhulia,
14-2-'27

Dear Sisters,

I am in receipt of your letter written by Chi. Manibehn Patel.

What you write to me in regard to the women that intend to visit the Ashram is quite right. For the present I cannot expect any of you to keep them with you. I wish only that you will mix freely with them, will look after them if they are ill, will not keep them away from you, and will invite them off and on to you.

You may know that Tara's older sister Sushila has been betrothed to Manilal *. The marriage will take place in Akola on the 6th of March. I shall, therefore, reach the Ashram on the evening of the 8th or on the morning of the 9th. 14th is Monday. I shall stay on in the Ashram till that day, and then again I start out. So I shall have only a few days in the Ashram.

Whether I will or no, I get involved thus in marriages. And yet the more I am drawn into such activities, the more I see that it is very necessary for men and women to observe celibacy. Manilal remained unmarried for 32 years, merely in order to develop self-control. He then expressed a desire to marry, and so I began looking for a good match. As he is to marry in a family of persons devoted to God, I expect nothing but good to result from this alliance.

We should not feel bashful to talk about marriage. But whether married or unmarried, we

* Gandhiji's second son.



should not become a prey to passion by such talk. He who cannot control his passions should certainly marry. But he who can control them, should do so and seek to obtain salvation in this very life.

Blessings from Bapu

12

Sholapur,
21-2-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter.

I find that your carding work has been going on well. If you go on regularly in the same way, you will make good progress within a short time.

The effect of regular work is like that of taking food regularly. It nourishes the soul. But even as eating too much at a time spoils one's health, so excessive work at a time wears out one's spirit.

We are in Sholapur today. It is a big city. There are five mills here. The biggest of them belongs to Morarji Gokuldas. His grandson Shantikumar is still a youth so far as age goes, but he has a great soul. He loves Khadi and wears only Khadi. I do not mean that this is his greatest virtue. He is sympathetic, generous, humble, devoted to God, and truthful. He has the virtue that his name indicates, i.e. he is calmness incarnate. I am very glad that such a jewel amongst men is found in a multi-millionaire family. I was not acquainted with his wife. Yesterday while eating, I made her sit down by me and talked to her to my heart's content. I suggested to her that she should take to public work

like her husband. I cited all of you as an example to her. Was I right in doing so or was it only my conceit? You alone know whether all of you are devoted to service. Anyhow that is what escaped my lips. It is upto you to justify my statement.

Monday   Blessings from Bapu

13

Malvan,
28-2-'27

Dear Sisters,

This is the last letter I write to you, for next Monday I should be on my way to you.

In my tours women's meetings are held. Consequently I keep getting new ideas in regard to women. I see that women hold the key to Swaraj. But who will awaken them? Many women are lazy. Who will make them industrious? Mothers spoil their children from birth. Who will prevent them? They load their children with ornaments and clothes of various kinds. They get their girls married quite young. They give them in marriage to old men. When I look at the jewels on women, I feel very distressed. Who will explain to them that real beauty lies in the heart and not in these ornaments? I can write on such matters. But how can all this be set right? It can be done only when a Draupadi of dazzling lustre rises from amongst women. You have to make an attempt to acquire the necessary qualifications. Make up your mind about it and then

have patience. One cannot achieve anything by being in too great a hurry.

Blessings from Bapu

14

14-3-'27

Dear Sisters,

Parting this time was particularly painful as I was anxious to talk to you on many matters, and to exchange views with you. But who is after all free ? We are in God's hands and we dance as He makes us dance. If we act freely, according to our own desires, we shall come to grief. So though my desire was not fulfilled, I am not worrying. We shall meet again when He desires. Till then we shall communicate by means of letters.

The following are what I would like you to do :

1. Acquire a methodical and sound knowledge of carding and spinning — so well that you may be able to teach others.

2. Look after the common kitchen and make it an ideal one. For the present I do not desire that any one of you should devote herself always to that work, but since this work is yours by birth and training, I entrust to you the responsibility of seeing that the cooking is excellent and that the kitchen is clean.

These two tasks are all right for you. Are they not ?

Mirabai will leave today for Revari Ashram, where Jamnalalji's daughter is.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

15

Nipani,
28-3-'27

Dear Sisters,

Do not feel nervous when I tell you that I have suffered a set-back in health *. Today it is only a set-back. In a few years even if life passes away, what does it matter ? The Gita clearly teaches and we also experience it daily that those who are born, die and those who die, are born again. Every one repays his debt more or less and passes away.

What I am going to tell you now is perfectly true. If it were not for passion there would be no disease. A person having no passions has also of course to die. But he quietly drops away like a ripe fruit. I hope and desire that I should drop out like that. I still entertain such a hope and desire. But who knows ? Passions I still have and they play their part. When one is completely free from them, one attains the perfect state.

Devote yourselves entirely to your duties. Youth is given to us to conquer passions. We should not allow it to pass away fruitlessly. Safeguard your purity. Do not give up the spinning wheel. As far as possible do not also leave the Ashram.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

* For the first time Gandhiji had an attack of blood-pressure.

16

11-4-'27

Dear Sisters,

You have absolved me from writing to you. But how can I make use of it unless it is necessary? I am not in such a bad state of health that I cannot write to you. Yesterday I even walked a good distance. To write to you is no great task for me.

Has any of you decided to supervise the common kitchen by turns? Lakshmibehn * had definitely expressed her willingness to do so. If no one else has taken up the work, at least she should do it. If there is any defect in the common kitchen, the fault will belong to all of you. Will it not? You may free yourselves from kitchen work when the men have acquired as much skill as you have at present, but certainly not till then.

Please find enclosed Mirabehn's letter. Give it to Chi. Manilal. I have sent it, as it is worth reading.

Blessings from Bapu

* The wife of Shri Khare, the musician. She had experience in running a common kitchen at the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Bombay.

17

1605 18-4-'27

Dear Sisters,

I am sending this letter to your secretary in the absence of Gangabehn. In Gangabehn's absence you should appoint an acting leader. Your activities should now be carried on so well that they go on automatically like in other institutions. In order that this may be so, a leader is absolutely necessary. A leader should have fewer powers but greater responsibilities ; she should always be thinking of the good of the institution, and try to increase its capacity for service.

It appears that you celebrated the National Week very well. It was good that you undertook the task of cleaning latrines. Go on thus taking up fresh responsibilities according to your strength.

Maintain contact with women who go out of the Ashram for work. You must be in touch with Rajibehn and Champavatibehn. Write to me if you know how Rajibehn is getting on with her work.

My health appears to have improved. To this end I am making a simple experiment. If it proves successful, it has many uses. But I do not want to take your time now by describing it to you. I may venture to tell you about it next week.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu



18

25-4-'27

Dear Sisters,

It looks as though you gave me leave from writing to you, because you yourselves do not wish to write to me. Or is it because there is disorder in your Mandal for want of a new president, even as chaos may prevail in a country where there is no king ?

Whatever it be, how is it possible that I eat and drink and move about and yet do not think of you ? I hear nothing about Gangadevi from any of you. I take it, therefore, that she is now restored to normal health. Do not fail to inform me if any of you falls ill.

There are at present men as well as women in the Ashram. But suppose, some day there are no men, and thieves or others attack the Ashram. Have you ever thought what you would do in such a case ? If you have not thought about this, please do so now and let me know. Do not imagine that such an occasion will never or nowhere arise. They do arise many a time in our small villages. They happen often in South Africa.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

19

2-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have now received plenty of hand-made paper. Even though the size of the paper is a little shorter than what you like, I believe you will prefer hand-made paper. Our duty today, of course, lies in regard to cloth ; because from it our starving masses obtain their bread. There are very few people who can make paper. Yet as long as we find something that is made in our country, and it is good, we must get it and use it.

It is very good that you have set apart some money for postage. It does not matter if the amount is small ; but keep regular accounts, and those of you who can, learn thereby how to keep accounts.

I find your progress in another direction also praiseworthy. Last week I raised the problem of protecting yourselves against thieves. Do not lightly brush it aside. I wish you to falsify the epithets 'weak' 'timid' etc. that are specially used in regard to women. They do not apply to all women. Who would call the women of Raniparaj 'timid'? How are they weak? The women of the West, of course, take part these days in everything. I do not mean to say that they should be imitated ; but at least they have falsified many of the assumptions of men. The Negro women of Africa are not at all 'timid'. There is even perhaps no such epithet for them in their language. In Burma it is women who carry on business of all kinds.

I raised the problem of thieves, not for frightening you, but for making you think calmly over it. In the Ashram we all desire to have experience of the 'soul'. Now the soul is neither male nor female; neither young nor old. The scriptures and our experience tell us that these are the attributes only of the body. The same soul pervades you and me. Then how shall I be able to protect you? Is it not by learning the art of protecting myself? Only then I can teach it to you. This is enough for you to think over at present. If I feel inclined, I will take up the subject once again.

If any of you wish to write to me, do so freely.

I learn that Valjibhai has frightened all of you. Do not get frightened.

Day of Silence Blessings from Bapu

20

Nandi Durg,
9-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

The thoughts expressed by you in regard to thieves appear to me to be correct. For the present, it is enough if you try to forget that you are 'weak'. None of you should, by any means, make the mistake of taking me to mean that men should give up their duty of protecting women. Because woman tries to come into her own, man should not think that she has become capable of protecting herself ; a man, who, thinking so, does not protect women, is nothing but a shameless coward. He may be regarded as impotent. Man has kept woman in subordination and in a state of dependence ; so he should certainly undertake her protection. We are trying in the Ashram to make both men and women alert and independent. But the desired stage is still far off. Till then my trying to awaken and put courage into you is one thing and men's duty towards you is another thing. So as long as there is one man alive in the Ashram, you should regard yourselves as fully protected.

There is no news of Surajbehn in your letter.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

21

16-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

I am very glad to know that you do not feel afraid. Why should one, who knows that God is the Protector of all ? By saying that God is the Protector of all I do not mean that none would rob us or harm us. If such fear possesses us, it is no fault of the capacity of God to protect us ; it is due to our want of faith in Him. The river is ever ready to give water to all. But if one does not approach it with a pot to get water, or avoids it thinking its water poisonous, how can that be the fault of the river ? Fear is a sign of lack of faith. But faith cannot be developed by means of reasoning. It comes through quiet thinking, contemplating and practising. To develop such faith, we pray to God, read good books, seek the company of the good and take to sacrificial spinning at the wheel. He who has no faith will not even touch the spinning-wheel.

I am getting better.

Blessings from Bapu

22

23-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

You have taken on yourselves the management of the store. I regard it as a great step forward. Stick diligently to the work. God will help you to be successful. There are plenty of other such duties that you can undertake whereby you can bring credit to the Ashram. But I am in no hurry about it. Since your minds are pure, you will gradually take up many new duties of your own accord. For the present concentrate upon making the management of the store a complete success. Attend to even the smallest detail connected with it. You must of course learn accounts. Do not imagine that it is difficult. It is very easy to write or understand accounts. The difficulty lies in addition. If one does not know the mathematical tables or addition, one would certainly experience some difficulty. But addition comes with practice. Learn addition, subtraction, multiplication and simple division, whichever you do not know. This does involve a little trouble but the rest is all very easy. If one has a desire for it, one would find it even interesting.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

23

Nandi Durg,
30-5-'27

Dear Sisters,

There is no letter from you this week.

Have you received any letters from Mirabehn? I find from her letters that she has been working hard amongst both men and women. There is one theme in her letters which I would like you to know. She writes that the women with whom she comes in contact are all extremely good, but at the same time very ignorant. They do not know even the simplest things. If Mirabehn talks to them of the spinning-wheel, they are amazed. They cannot of course understand that spinning is necessary in the interests of the poor. Their idea about religion is a visit to the temple. They do not know what 'service' is. It may be that some of this is due to their lack of understanding. But it is due chiefly to their terrible ignorance. It is men who are mainly responsible for it. The only remedy for it is their awakening; is it not so? This responsibility rests upon you. All of you should prepare yourselves for the work according to your abilities.

Blessings from Bapu

24

Bangalore,
6-6-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter.

I have reached Bangalore today. I had no difficulty. Doctors examined me ; they say that I shall be all right within a month's time.

What Ramaniklalbhai says is quite true. There are many books that are worth reading. Let him choose what he likes. After all everything depends upon the interest that one who reads to others can create in his listeners. None of you should pass over any portion of the book which you do not understand. You should ask for an explanation again and again till you understand it. Many things become clear if you understand even one thing thoroughly.

I like the bangles made by Manibehn Patel out of Khadi cloth. I have suggested that the bangles should be made, not of Khaddar, but of yarn. The Raksha * is also a kind of bangle and it is always made of yarn. One can put in as much art and colour in the preparation of a yarn bangle as one likes. And I am sure that the innocent pleasure one gets from wearing a thing prepared with careful art by one's own hand can never be had by putting on even a diamond-studded bangle costing thousands of rupees.

* Thread that a sister, whether young or old, puts round the wrist of her brother on the coconut day as a token of her good wishes.

Tell Hirabehn that if she desires to study, she should go to Jekibehn regularly and not merely when it pleases her to do so.

Blessings from Bapu

25

13-6-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter.

You once wrote to me that all of you take it in turn to lead the prayers by reciting the Sanskrit verses. I have still to congratulate you upon this practice. I hope your pronunciation is correct. Of course God does not take into account whether His name is uttered correctly or incorrectly. He only cares for the language of the heart. If the heart is pure, even stammered prayers are rated cent percent. While on this topic I would like to state a few of the pleasant experiences that I am having here.

Mysore is a part of Karnatak, which gave us Kaka Saheb. The women here know both singing and Sanskrit very well. I heard their singing in Nandi. I heard both singing and recitation of Sanskrit by two women here the day before yesterday. They sang the substance of the Ramayana in purely pronounced Sanskrit. I think there were more than a hundred verses. I could not detect a single flaw in their recitation. One of them is still a student. She knows also the meaning of the verses. But why should I write about this to you ? I regard the work you are doing there now as more important than a study of Sanskrit. If you become fearless, remain pure, turn out to be

good workers and live and work together, it will mean an education superior to any other. If in addition, it is accompanied by a study of Sanskrit, it will be sweeter even than honey.

I suppose Gangabehn and others get my letter or a copy of it to read.

Blessings from Bapu

26

Bangalore,
20-6-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter.

That I praised the bangles made of yarn does not mean that all of you should begin to wear them. Such innovations will endure only if they proceed from the heart. And I wish that none of you should do anything merely for the shame of not conforming.

At present I daily visit a milk-producing centre. It arouses various thoughts in my mind — one of which I shall put down here. Just as you have undertaken the work of the store, so also you can engage yourselves in these milk centre activities. Thousands of cattle daily perish due to our ignorance and idleness. I find that this is work which can be done as easily by women as by men. The well-built cowherd-women appear before my mind's eyes. We are already farmers, weavers and sweepers ; we need to be cowherds too.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

27

Sunday night,
26-6-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter and the attendance book. Please do continue to send me the attendance book. I get to know many things from it.

I have been able to get a great deal of news from Manibehn. Carry on against all odds the work of managing the store. We regard the Ashram as our family, and through it we try to learn to look upon our country and the whole world as one family. Therefore just as in a family we share one another's responsibilities, do likewise in the case of the store.

Do not let my suggestions like that of service of the cow frighten you. I shall go on writing whatever suggests itself to me. You choose out of them what you like, according to your abilities, and put them into effect when you get an opportunity.

Only the meritorious will meet with a death like that of Valjibhai's mother.*

Blessed is the son, blessed the mother, and blessed the Ashram where such a death took place. I am reminded also of Vrajlalbhai's sacred death.†

Blessings from Bapu

* Valjibhai's mother, after crossing the river for going to town from the Ashram, gave up her life in the lap of her son, on reaching the burning ghat.

† Vrajlalbhai was drowned as he was trying to remove a pot from a well.

28

Bangalore,
4-7-'27

Dear Sisters,

I remembered you yesterday. Exhibitions and such other activities are really more the work of women than of men. No one was able to decorate his or her stall better than Mithubehn. It is just as one might expect ; because for all the twenty-four hours she keeps thinking how Khadi can be beautified. Under her guidance, about four hundred girls now work on Khadi and earn their livelihood, or wear only Khadi spun by themselves.

Manibehn has been able to bring credit to herself and to the exhibition by means of her carding bow.

As so many Ashram people have now arrived, the recitation of the Gita in the mornings has begun. Today Manibehn recited the fourth chapter. Previously also, she has been reciting the Gita. Her pronunciation is good. Indeed all of you should learn to read the Gita with correct pronunciation and understand its meaning. Just as a woman is not accomplished unless she knows cooking well, so also there is no exaggeration in saying that a woman who does not know the Gita, is not accomplished.

Who is in charge of the store at present ?

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

29

Bangalore,
11-7-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter.

Manibehn will let you know as to how many women took part in the exhibition, and in what way. I merely state that one of them was expert in keeping accounts while some others were equally expert in selling Khaddar. They have received silver and gold medals. A blind woman spun exceedingly well in the exhibition. She was the centre of attraction for all. One of the women stood first in spinning very fine, strong yarn. Manibehn upheld the good name of the Ashram. Her carding drew the attention of all.

There was a Hindi Sammelan here. There also one of the women stood first. Some of the women here are making very good attempts to learn Hindi.

All this awakening is coming on very well in this State. I have already written to you how two or three here sing beautifully at evening prayers. On Saturday one of them played the *vina* for me. She herself composes *bhajans*.* She is reported to be very clever in playing the *vina*.

Day of Silence   Blessings from Bapu

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* Songs of Prayer.

30

18-7-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have to write many letters today. But how can I miss writing to you ?

I wish to kill two birds at one stroke. Now this is an English saying. Such expressions are current where violence is common. Though I have used the saying, I do not of course mean any violence. All I want to say is that I wish to serve two purposes by writing this letter.

My two-fold purpose is :

To write my usual letter to you and to include in it my reply to Chi. Vasumati. She asks " You say that women should know how to pronounce the Gita even as well as they know to cook. How is this possible ? It will require much time."

Indeed it does take time. But what can one not achieve with perseverance ? Even if one devotes a little time regularly, one can achieve one's end. It is difficult to learn to cook after you have grown up. Even then you can learn it if you have patience. If our women cannot pronounce Sanskrit well, the fault is not theirs. It is either of their parents or of the people at their husband's house if they are married. But what is the use of our putting the blame on others ? Let us see how we can remove the defect. In the Ashram we look for our defects and then try to remedy them. Of course we should not overdo learning to pronounce Sanskrit correctly. We should carry out our other duties in the Ashram, and while doing so, try also to improve our pronunciation.

The only point I wanted you to know was that in the Karnatak many women pronounce Sanskrit more correctly than even men in Gujarat.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

31

Bangalore,
25-7-'27

Dear Sisters,

I wish to devote this letter to the subject of attendance at classes. I find great irregularity in your attendance. In the Ashram, social life and lessons in social service begin with these women's classes. Therefore, just as we do not give up taking our daily food except when there is illness or other such extraordinary circumstance, so also we may be absent from the classes only for such unavoidable reasons. You have taken a vow to attend the classes regularly. Then how can you break that vow ? As the body can be sustained only by observing the rules of bodily health, an institution or society can be sustained only by observing their respective rules. Will you not, therefore, promise me that you will not absent yourselves except for reasons which no one can consider doubtful?

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

32

1-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

This time the post has been irregular. Monday post was received here only yesterday. I hope none of you was frightened on account of the torrential rains,* and flood. Such occasions arise to test whether we have learnt the lessons of life. What would it matter if the Ashram was carried away by the flood in spite of our best endeavours, or even Ahmedabad? The wonder is that so much has remained safe in spite of such torrential floods. But after all, who knows whether we are gainers by their being saved or by their being lost? It may be that what has been saved has really been lost and what has been lost has really been saved. But everyone likes to be saved, and we are thankful to God, if we are saved. Actually, however, one should thank God for everything that transpires. That is what is meant by the state of equanimity.

But what about our losing Kantilal? How can we bear this grief? That also we must bear. One's intellect works in accordance with one's *karma*. If Kantilal has committed suicide, I think I can guess its reason. But we need not bother about the reason. We should make up our minds that we ourselves will never commit suicide. Those who commit suicide either worry too much about their worldly affairs, or try to hide their faults from the world. We should never try to look what we are not, or try to do what we cannot.

Blessings from Bapu

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* This refers to the great flood that overtook Gujarat in 1927.

33

8-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter. Today we are in a place far off from Bangalore. It is less cold, but more green here. It is somewhat like Amboli.

Although I am carrying on my activities here, my thoughts hover round the Ashram and Gujarat. This is not a virtue, but a defect, since it is undue attachment. What more could I have done had I been in the Ashram? How can I help Gujarat? And yet my soul is restless. You should guard yourselves against such a defect, but there is one condition attached to such a state of indifference. He alone can remain thus indifferent who is always absorbed in the performance of his duties. The stone is indifferent, but it is inanimate. As compared with it, we are animate. So only if we remain indifferent to outside conditions because of our complete absorption in our immediate duties, may we be held to have lived successfully. Such steadiness of mind does not come about suddenly.

I have put before you my defect clearly, so that you may not by any means imitate it. My language today is slightly difficult. If a word or an idea is difficult to understand, please try your best to understand it.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

34

Shimoga,
15-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

Today I must be brief. I have neither time nor topic on which to write.

I have been forgetting to answer your inquiries about Manibehn's return. Most probably she will start from here soon after the 20th, and stopping at Poona and Bombay for a day each, she will reach Broach and from there go to the Ashram.

We are having trying times in the Ashram at present. All of you should become and continue to be brave. Our responsibilities are very great. If we always have God in our hearts, no harm can ever befall us.

Kaka Saheb keeps well here.

Day of Silence   Blessings from Bapu

35

22-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

We returned here yesterday after completing our longest tour of Mysore. I am to leave Mysore by the end of this week, i.e. on Tuesday, the 30th instant. So letters which will reach me after Monday should be addressed to Madras. I do not know the exact address at Madras.

It is very good that you are going to contribute to the Flood Relief Fund by doing work such as sewing. Get the labouring women of the Ashram also to co-operate in this work. I do not mean that they should sew. But if they like, they can contribute a day's wages. It will be enough for the present if you came in contact with them making use of this occasion. If they do not desire to, they need not contribute. If we realize at this time that we have failed to enter into the life of these labouring women, the contact with them will increase in the future. We have to develop in ourselves the quality of looking upon all as equals as laid down in the Gita.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

36

29-8-'27

Dear Sisters,

I received your letter drafted by Ramaniklalbhai.

You have not caught my point. There were several things implied in my letter. It is always so in letters. If those implications in my letter were made explicit, this is what it would come to :

When we are engaged in a particular type of service, we should not think of other fields of service so long as that is not necessary. If we do so, it would be regarded as either vanity or infatuation. Here I am doing a necessary piece of service as well as is possible for a sick man to do. If at such a time I think of Gujarat flood relief or of solving the Ashram problems in the way in which I would solve them if I were there, it would be infatuation. If you were in such a condition, it would be so for you too. There is no question of one's being great or small. You are engaged there in the work of service. Suppose I fall ill, very ill, or suppose there were floods here, as great as those in Gujarat, it would be infatuation for you to think of running down here, even though you are not regarded as great as I. That would not mean that you would have no feeling of sympathy for me or for the sufferers in the Madras floods. Sympathy there must be, in which your feeling for others finds expression and should find expression. But if you become restless about it, it is infatuation, and should be avoided. It is of course a different question as to when it becomes one's duty to leave one's work unfinished and to rush to another. For flood relief, most of the members left the Ashram. That was our duty. And

yet, for those who could not go, there was no need to feel agitated. Ask me if you do not still understand me.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

37

5-9-'27

Dear Sisters,

I received your note.

You must have understood the point of my suggestion that you should develop contact with the labouring women in the Ashram. Getting a few coppers from them for relief work is not an important thing. The chief purpose is that through this you may establish a bond of fellowship with them. You should regard them as yourselves; they should regard you as themselves, and all should partake of each other's joys and sorrows. I do not mean that you should spend much time on this. It is really a matter of changing one's heart. We should long to see that they have the same food as we, and the same clothes, that they, too, get everything we wish and obtain for ourselves, and we should try to put this longing into effect as much as possible.

Do not frighten yourselves by giving a very wide meaning to what I am writing. Words have at least two meanings — a narrow one and a broad one. We should try to comprehend the broad one, but begin cautiously to put into effect the narrow one, so as to avoid getting frightened over it.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

38

12-9-'27

Dear Sisters,

I should not say I received your letter — it was merely a note. I learn that you have appointed Gangabehn Zhaveri as your President, since Kashibehn has gone to Rajkot. The fact that you are able to appoint Presidents one after another is some proof of your ability to run your organization. I would take it as a sounder proof when you respect your President with all your heart and when all of you work in perfect unison in running the organization. Even men have not as yet been able to acquit themselves well in this respect. When we look at affairs in our Ashram we find that we are not yet trained to carry on the administration of the Ashram without false attachment or hatred. So it is not surprising that you also have not attained that stage. But if you persevere, I am sure you will acquire such capacity. Try your best to get rid of false attachment and hatred. Only by striving can we make progress.

It is good that the older Gangabehn has gone out for relief work.

My work continues, though slowly.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

39

Trichinopoly,
19-9-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your notes. I keep an eye on your work from here. One who works according to one's full capacity does all that can be expected of one. But in our work we should develop the Gita attitude which we desire to possess. That attitude is that whatever we do, we do selflessly in a spirit of service. Spirit of service means in a spirit of dedication to God. One who does so, loses all idea of self. He has no hatred for anybody. On the contrary he is generous to others. Even in regard to the smallest piece of service you render, ask yourselves from time to time whether you exhibit all these qualities.

Ramaniklalbhai raised a question in regard to what I wrote to you about myself. You have not written to me whether all of you understood what I wrote in reply. I wish that you would discuss what I write to you, and ask me regarding matters that remain to be solved.

My health continues to permit me to do my work.

Day of Silence　　　　Blessings from Bapu

40

26-9-'27

Dear Sisters,

You will not find today's letter dry. I dared not write till now of certain things that were uppermost in my mind. I wrote to you tactful letters and so did you. We wrote to each other as diplomats do, and not as ordinary human beings. Our letters were not real replies to each other, but formal acknowledgments such as we get from the Government.

Today I wish to write to you about the quarrels that are going on amongst you in the Ashram. You do not have mutual trust and respect, and there are petty intrigues amongst you all the time. You and I knew of this, but neither dared to write. I thought I must cut through this studied silence. Why is there so much quarrel amongst you ? What is the cause of this enmity ? Who is to blame ? Investigate into all this.

Religion declares that as long as man harbours evil he is impure and unfit to stand before God. So the first duty of any of you who is impure is to confess it and thus purge yourselves of the evil. The immediate cause of this letter is a casual letter from Manibehn. Relief work fell to her lot. So she left the Ashram. But she poured out her distress in a letter. She could not tolerate the disunion prevailing in the Ashram. Please look into this, be watchful and bring credit to the Ashram.

If after reading this letter any of you desires to write to me a separate letter, you are welcome to do so.

Blessings from Bapu

41

3-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

Your reply to my last letter was as I anticipated even when I wrote that letter. The first step in self-purification is the admission and eradication of whatever hatred there is in one's heart. As long as we harbour ill-will or suspicion against our neighbour and do not strive to get rid of it, we cannot learn our first lessons of love for him. In the Ashram, we must develop the strength to do at least this much.

Think well over the matter of prayers. I also believe that the seven o'clock meeting should not be given up. You accepted it as your special duty to make your class instructive. For the present I can only suggest that those of you who have the desire and energy to attend the 4 A.M. prayers may resolve to do so, without entering into any discussion about it with others, and thereafter, continue to keep your resolution, in spite of every hardship, as long as health permits.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

42

10-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

It appears my last letter has caused a good deal of commotion amongst you. That is perhaps why I have not as yet heard from you. I am glad of the commotion. I shall not feel satisfied if you keep contact with one another merely on the basis of formal courtesy; nor should you, too, be satisfied with it. We should never want just to get on anyhow. We must become one in heart. We should not deceive ourselves, others, or the world. So whatever is working in our hearts must be brought out into the open. Once the heart is thoroughly purified, it will take long for it to become impure again. But if any impurity is allowed to remain in the heart, even good thoughts will get sullied, just as water poured into a dirty vessel gets sullied. If we have a feeling of suspicion regarding some one, we begin to suspect everything he does.

Blessings from Bapu

43

17-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have received your letter. I understand that all of you have become very uneasy. When I opened this topic, I knew that you would feel agitated. But I found no other way of cleansing your minds of impurity. Be patient. Everything will turn out well, and we shall enjoy new and real peace. We are one family. What do we do when there is unrest in the family ? If both parties are good, each puts up with the other's anger, and tries to subdue his own. That is what we also should do. If everyone strictly does her duty, those who do not do it, will begin to do theirs, and if they do not, they will appear conspicuous as defaulters. Learn from this commotion to be generous towards each other. To be generous means having no hatred for those whom we consider to be at fault, and loving and serving them. It is not generosity or love, if we have goodwill for others only as long as they and we are united in thought and action. That should be called merely friendship or mutual affection. The application of the term 'love' is wrong in such cases. 'Love' means feeling friendship for the enemy.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

44

Diwali,* Tuesday,
25-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter. Do not lose heart. Do not think, let everyone first become good, then I too will be good. On the contrary, the principle to be followed is: 'If I become pure, others too will follow suit'. We have two proverbs to this effect. One says: 'If you are good, the world is good', and the other: 'As the individual, so the universe'. If it be not so, one can never have any hope for the world.

Rama is the support of the world. Sita is the mainstay of all women. So without being dejected, if every one of you strives to be pure, and becomes devoted to her duty, you will find that everything else will straighten out in the end. "Defeat" can never find a place in our dictionary.

I am waiting to see what new resolves you are going to make on New Year's Day. Talk with one who does not talk to you; go to one who does not come to you; make up with one who is displeased with you, and all this not for their good but for your own. The world is a creditor, we are its debtors.

Blessings from Bapu

* Hindu New Year.

45

31-10-'27

Dear Sisters,

I tried to write in ink ; but the train is moving so fast and is shaking so much that I cannot. And yet, how can I miss writing to you my Monday letter ?

Never give up your efforts at unity. Success lies in the effort itself. God has promised that effort for the good never goes fruitless and all of us have had experience of this to some extent. You cannot now give up the store-work. You should not, out of fear, give up work once undertaken. There is no reason for fear or for defeat. If a few of you gain experience and become expert in the work, there should not be any hitch whatsoever ; if you give up the store-work out of a feeling of defeatism, you will never be able to undertake any other work. Even if there are differences of opinion and petty jealousies, whatever work has to be done must be done. We should certainly not do less than what others do. I hope to see you within three or four days.

Blessings from Bapu

46

7-11-'27

Dear Sisters,

I am writing this letter in a steamer. It will be posted after two days, but since I always write to you on Mondays, I am doing so today.

This time I spent two very busy days in the Ashram. I felt tired, but I did not like to leave the Ashram.

You must have been observing that your responsibilities are growing day by day. None of you should lose heart. Remain absorbed in your duties, and try to get peace even where there is none. Our joy must lie in our devotion to duty, and not in the success of our efforts or in the favourableness of circumstances. Narsinh Mehta has said : "If Man had the power to do everything, no one would be unhappy, for he would destroy his enemies and allow only friends to live". But Man is a lowly creature. He becomes great only when he gives up pride and becomes one with God. A drop of the ocean, if separated from it, serves no useful purpose ; but remaining in the ocean, it shares in bearing on its bosom the heavy burden of this huge steamer. In the same way, if we learn to be one with the Ashram, and thereby with the world and God, we may be said to be bearing the burden of the world. But in such a state, the 'I' or 'you' is abandoned, and only 'He' remains.

As the steamer is only a cargo steamer, it is very quiet.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

47

Colombo,
14-11-'27

Dear Sisters,

We reached Colombo on Saturday. I expected a letter from one or other of you. But it has not arrived yet, today being Monday.

This is a very pleasant land. Though it is outside India, it is exactly like it. Indians here are mostly from the South. They do not look very different from the local inhabitants. Women's dress here is very simple ; in fact it may be said that men and women dress practically in the same way. Both put on *dhotis* in the manner in which Surendra does. Only the *dhotis* here are coloured with a variety of designs on them. Both wear jackets, though there is a slight difference between them in shape. Women are never without jackets, whereas men are content to appear often only with *dhotis* on. Malabar has also similar dress, only the *dhotis* there are not coloured. These clothes are bound to be very cheap. If people in these two States begin to take a liking to Khaddar, there will be no difficulty about their wearing Khadi clothes.

Day of Silence   Blessings from Bapu

48

21-11-'27

Dear Sisters,

I have as yet not received any letter from you. I have to wander about so much in Ceylon that it is difficult to get my post immediately from Colombo.

When I look at the Ceylonese women, I think of our Ashram women. I wrote to you upon the simplicity of the dress of ordinary women. On the other hand, women of higher social standing have grown so fashionable that they put on nothing but silk and embroidery. To my eyes, it does not behove them at all. I always ask myself, "Whom do these women want to please by putting on such fashionable clothes?" There is no purdah system here.

Why women try to look fine and embellish themselves, you can tell better than I. But seeing all this, I felt that it was good that we had established the tradition in the Ashram of wearing the least possible ornaments. I cannot of course say that in the Ashram we do not put on any ornaments at all. Write to me as to whether you agree.

Blessings from Bapu

49

Jaffna,
28-11-'27

Dear Sisters,

This region is also called Ceylon, but it is very different from South Ceylon. The people inhabiting this part are Tamilians from the south of India, and they observe Indian manners and customs. This part, therefore, does not look very different from the south of India. It is true that women here live a little more freely than those of South India.

There is a Gujarati couple here. The lady (Kashibai) belongs to a good family from Rajkot, and her husband is the son of the well-known Haragovinddas Kantawalla of Baroda. He is a District Judge here. They are well-respected. Half of my meals is supplied by Kashibai. So Ba may be said to be on a holiday.

We are leaving this place tomorrow. We are now going to a land of human skeletons, and I am anxious to see them in order to stir up my heart and to find the still deeper meaning of the spinning-wheel.

Blessings from Bapu

50

Brahmapur (Burma),
5-12-'27

Dear Sisters,

Recevied your letter in the handwriting of Manibehn. I have very little time today. I am convinced that we should not allow jewels in the Ashram. As long as there is terrible starvation in our land it is sin for us to keep or put on even a ring studded with gems. Our clothes must be just sufficient to cover our nakedness and to protect us against heat and cold. All of you should try to achieve this ideal.

I shall not write today about how the desire for ornaments arose.

It looks as though you have not also understood my question properly.

How is it that Lakshmibehn is ill ? She was not to fall ill.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

51

Bolgadh,
12-12-'27

Dear Sisters,

There is profound loneliness around me, but it is the loneliness of a sick man's room. When I see the state of people here my heart burns within me, and I very much long to stay on here. If any of you is willing to come here, I would tempt her to do so. All the women here observe purdah. The people have neither enough clothes to wear nor food to eat. When Mirabehn had suggested, before I went to Orissa, that it was our duty to put on still fewer clothes, I had felt embarrassed. But when I see things here, I feel that her suggestion was indeed proper. Women here put on only one *dhoti*, one half covers the lower part, and the other half the upper part of their bodies. They get neither milk nor ghee. They are terror-stricken. Due to some policeman's threat, they do not come even anywhere near me. I left Mirabehn in the house and went out; immediately about fifty women surrounded her and began to ask her questions. If a woman works here amongst these women, I believe, she can do a great deal. But this is all for the future. For the present, all of you should get fully trained. "Training" means forgetting oneself. If you can do that, you can go anywhere you like thereafter.

Day of Silence　　　　Blessings from Bapu

52

Cuttack,
19-12-'27

Dear Sisters,

God willing there will be only one more Monday for me to write to you.

I have received Manibehn's letter. You suggest that I should discuss the topic of dress in greater detail. I shall not do so now, but you may open the question when we meet. As long as we cherish an attraction for fineries, in the deepest recesses of our heart, it is useless to give them up merely outwardly. But if that infatuation for fineries passes off, and still the mind is drawn towards them, then we should, even if only outwardly, make the necessary change, whether through a sense of shame or by way of imitation of others, and ultimately root out this craving. Infatuation and such like, are our enemies; they harass us so much that we should protect ourselves from them with help secured from any appropriate quarter. I am writing all this for those who are honest and sincere. The Gita says in one place that those who pretend self-control outwardly, but who crave for sensual pleasures in their hearts, are foolish and deceitful. In regard to those who are honestly sincere, the Gita teaches that they should constantly control the passions that agitate them.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

53

Bardoli,
6-8-'28

Dear Sisters,

It appears the settlement * is practically arrived at. So I hope to reach there early. Vallabhbhai wishes to stop me here for a few days. Reliable information about the settlement will come tomorrow.

I have been thinking about your kitchen-work. I have been considering how you can take full interest and work wholeheartedly in that field. I feel that for that purpose it is necessary for you to shoulder the entire burden of the kitchen. You should get what help you need. But you can take up the responsibility only when you feel within you enough strength to shoulder the burden. Noise in the store-room and the kitchen must definitely cease. If Mirabehn were there, she would find it difficult to work with so much noise around, and even Chhotelalji would be disturbed. Those who sing the Gita verses about being steady in wisdom must form the habit of working quietly. While preparing bread or cleaning rice, why can we not get fully absorbed in our work and be silent? But when you say that time will not pass unless you talk, I become helpless. Even then I should say that it is not necessary for you to make so much noise. Why can we not, while working, think over the significance of some verse we may have learnt that day? Reflect over all this, and do only what you think best.

Day of Silence Blessings from Bapu

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* Of the no-tax campaign of the peasants of Bardoli Taluka against increase in land-tax.

54

Wardha,
26-11-'28

Dear Sisters,

We reached Jalgaon an hour late. Consequently we missed the connecting train and reached Wardha late.

I may at once draw your attention to one thing I see here. I am of course, dining in the Ashram kitchen here. By now I have dined three times, but there was an utter absence of all noise. It was perfectly quiet and I thought at that time of the loud din in our Ashram kitchen. There was no noise of clattering vessels or of people talking. Of course, in our Ashram we have children, while here there are none. That does make some difference, and yet you can teach children not to make noise and you yourselves can withstand the temptation of talking. That we cannot put a stop to the noise in our kitchen is one of our great failings.

I keenly feel the separation from you, because much remains to be done for getting more work from you. You should complete what remains unfinished.

Of course you understand your duties. The kitchen, Balamandir (kindergarten) and prayers are even now going on ; if you undertake any other responsibility besides these, never give it up out of a sense of failure. To become fit for it the most necessary condition of all is this :

Whatever work you once undertake, carry it out fully, never give up what you have volunteered to do. If you have to be absent, then make some arrangement

for your work ; and if no arrangement can be made, do not leave it and go.

Keep always cheerful ; be calm ; and make it a point to carry on your share of all the activities of the Ashram equally with men, and as well as men. This is not at all beyond your capacity. You need only desire it, and strive for it.

Day of Silence   Blessings from Bapu

55

Wardha,
3-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter written by Gangabehn. There is some point in what you write about the noise. But the responsibility for it lies not only with children but also with adults. Again, it should not be difficult for you to observe silence, or to make the children observe silence while dining or working. The main point is this : You should not think that if you do not talk, time will hang heavily while dining or working, or that children cannot be kept quiet. There are millions of men who do their work quietly. You know, do you not, that labourers in big factories are forced to keep silent while working ? Why cannot we voluntarily do what they have to do under compulsion. ?

Hereafter Kaka Saheb will be with you once a week. Do you still insist on Valjibhai's coming there too ? If I press him, he will come ; but I know that he is always busy and so, as a rule, I do not place any additional burden upon him if I can.

Day of Silence   Blessings from Bapu

56

Wardha,
10-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

Received a letter written on behalf of you.

You will get information about me from my letter to the whole Ashram.

All that is required to put a stop to the noise in the kitchen is your firm determination. If you make a determined effort, the noise will definitely cease.

If you are not as yet at home with your kitchen work, let me remind you that it is not possible for you to think of doing any other work for a whole year. It is best, therefore, that you take a liking for the work.

But the painful incident that has just occurred must set all of you thinking. The incident is not hidden from anyone, and it should not be hidden. Therefore it is that I discuss it here. Not one but at least three of you were involved in it. It is needless to point with scorn at these three, because, whether men or women, all of us may become guilty of such misconduct at some time or other, or have already committed such an act in our life time. I want you to learn two lessons from this incident. In the first place, we should stick to our kitchen work, for it is through it that we were able to know this failing that existed among us. If we live in the seclusion of a home, we can never know our capacity for sin. It appears only when a suitable opportunity presents itself. Here such an opportunity occurred, aided by (bad) companionship. The result was the emergence of the latent sinfulness. The kitchen has in this way

proved useful. Secondly, there was not enough courage to do things openly, so theft and lying were resorted to. Why should we not do a thing we want to do, boldly ? Why be afraid of appearing as we actually are ? If we like tasty food, why hide that fact ? Craving for tasty dishes is no sin. The sin lies in our hiding the craving, and in secretly indulging in it. Every one, man or woman, is at liberty to eat whatever he or she desires. That was one of our objects in converting the Satyagraha Ashram into a Udyogmandir (Temple of Industry). Any one may satisfy his craving for taste, the only restriction being that one may enjoy only the tastiness of dishes prepared in the common kitchen. None should cook tasty dishes whether secretly or openly in one's quarters. One may go out and eat a tasty dish at a friend's place, there is nothing to hide in this, or one may keep eatables such as dried fruits etc. in one's quarters. It is better if such freedom is not availed of, though there is no restriction to such freedom. My earnest request to you is this : Always appear what you are, whatever you do, do it openly. Never allow yourself to be unduly influenced by another. But if ever you promise to do a thing, never act contrary to it.

Everyone that does kitchen work must strictly follow her routine. It does not look as though you have as yet been able to remove the fears of the older Gangabehn. Every single activity in the kitchen must go on regularly like a machine.

This letter has not been revised.

Blessings from Bapu

57

Wardha,
17-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

There is no letter from you this time. But I gather from your previous letters that there is now comparative quiet in the kitchen. Do not be satisfied till you establish perfect quiet there. This work is mainly yours. Take upon yourselves the responsibility of making the kitchen attractive in every way. It can be regarded as an ideal part of an ideal school only when everyone dines in perfect quiet, when all do their work in it out of a sense of duty to be well performed, and remain content with whatever is served in it. The whole institution is a school as you know, and the kitchen is a school too. There the food should be scientifically stored, cooked, and eaten. Thus in every detail there should be cleanliness and a spirit of discipline. We do not go there or dine there for sensual satisfaction. The body is a temple of God ; as such it has to be kept clean and preserved by being nourished. If you adopt such an attitude, all the quarrels we see in regard to kitchen-work will disappear. In my letter addressed to the whole of the Ashram, I have made four suggestions. Think over them and try to practise whatever appeals to you.

Kailas, Shila and other children must not fall ill. If any child is ill, do not think it is the concern and responsibility of only its mother, but take up responsibility for it on yourselves. It should be the natural practice in our Ashram whenever a mother is unable to nurse a sick child or does not know

how, for anyone who knows the job to undertake to look after the child. No mother should feel that she is all alone with nobody to help.

Nothing more today.

Day of Silence Blessings from Bapu

Received both your letters.

58

Calcutta,
24-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

I can write only a very short letter today.

I have written a letter to Durgabehn. Please read it because it applies to all of you. You should learn a lesson from the death of Uma, namely that all the children of the Ashram are your own. If any of them dies, take it that God has taken it away. If others are born, take it that God has sent them to you. Even if there is no addition to the children in the Ashram by new births, the coming of new families adds to their number. If we learn to cherish equal love for all of them, we shall not feel the pain of separation from Uma, though we should strive to understand its deeper meaning.

We shall soon meet.

Day of Silence Blessings from Bapu

59

Calcutta,
31-12-'28

Dear Sisters,

I expect that this is my last letter to you. According to present indications I should be there on Sunday morning.

Today I have only enough time to warn you that on coming there I shall ask all of you to render an account of your activities. Where is the need now to write anything new? If you have settled down, if you have been able to bring quiet in the kitchen, and if you are regular in attending prayers, I should think that you have done a great deal.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

60

Karachi,
4-2-'29

Dear Sisters,

I hope your classes are going on regularly. I believe no better arrangements could have been made than what have naturally come into being. Take full advantage of the new arrangements.

Rasik * is in a very bad condition. I do not know whether he will be with you when this letter reaches you. But we daily recite that both birth and death are two different aspects of one and the same thing. He who is born has to die ; he who dies is born again. Some do get out of this cycle of birth and death ; but whether in or out of this cycle, one has no reason to feel pleasure or pain due to birth or death. I know this, and hence I wander about freely without fear. Rasik has become at present very fond of the Ramayana. This shows that his spirit has attained peace.

I wish you would improve the kitchen and the kindergarten. Do not tempt children to eat spicy things. You will find in future that such restraint will do them good. By this time you must have noticed that there is generally no harm done to the body because of not taking spices. Of course it is a different matter if some who have become used to them cannot give them up. Think over this. Stopping noisiness of children rests entirely with you.

* Gandhiji's grandson.

You should lighten the burden of Gangabehn. You may get her to do some other work also. But you should apportion her time, and for a fixed period everyday you should not even let her come to the kitchen.

You should give up the idea of getting ghee from anywhere else than from Chharodi * If you cannot get ghee from there, you should cultivate the habit of doing without it. It is, I believe, now established that there is no harm in using linseed oil. If we have milk and curds, it does not matter if we cannot get ghee.

Set a limit to the quantity of vegetables. Make it a rule that not more than ten tolas of cleaned vegetables should be cooked per person.

Your mental co-operation is needed in these changes, that is, you should accept these changes with your heart and mind.

You should prepare for kindergarten work. You can now get trained to your heart's content for it, because a teacher has been appointed especially for you in this matter, and he is quite capable.

I shall be there on the 16th night instead of the 15th since I was late here by a day.

Blessings from Bapu

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* A dairy centre in the district of Ahmedabad.

61

11-2-'29

Dear Sisters,

Received your letter.

I am satisfied with whatever you do wholeheartedly. My happiness lies in your peace and contentment.

In my heart there is no grief for the death of Rasik. Due to selfishness we grieve. It is nothing but infatuation. We all have to go where Rasik has gone. The question is only of time. Then why feel grief or fear death ? After death, there is either birth or salvation. We do like birth, and if we desire and strive for it, we can obtain salvation too. There is no third state. If we do not ceaselessly strive for salvation, then birth is inevitable. And if we like birth, as we do, then there is no cause for feeling unhappy. Grief is due to our infatuation. Thinking thus, I have not stopped my work here even for a moment.

I must have left you this time under a peculiar fate, since the date of my coming back to you is always getting pushed back. You will know this from Chhaganlal's letter.

Blessings from Bapu

62

Rangoon,
4-3-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today I have time only to remember you.

I may receive your letter by the next post. The post takes seven days to reach here.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

63

Mandalay,
18-3-'29

Dear Sisters,

Mandalay is the town where Lokamanya wrote his commentary on the Gita, and where Lalaji and Subhas Bose were kept prisoners. We are there at present. I have not been able to go out to see various places, but I have sent others to see them. The lady of the household with whom we are staying is of saintly character. She has immense wealth; her husband is alive, and she has children. And yet she does not put on even the smallest jewels. She does not encourage her daughters also to wear jewels. She has a daughter thirteen years of age. But she has been telling her not to think of marriage till she is twenty years old. She made her give up to me whatever ornaments she possessed. She follows also other rules of our Ashram. She reads *Navajivan* * regularly. She cannot be said to be highly educated.

I hope all your activities are going on well.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

* A weekly edited by Gandhiji.

64

Calcutta,
25-3-'29

Dear Sisters,

I write this letter simply by way of remembering you ; because I hope to reach there practically at the same time as this letter.

I do not find anywhere such real education as you are getting there in the Udyog Mandir. But we have still a great deal more to do. We should reach a stage when we can admit any woman to it quite fearlessly.

Day of Silence Blessings from Bapu

65

8-4-'29

Dear Sisters.

I cannot drive out of my mind the memory of the incidents that took place in the Udyog Mandir. I see lack of courage in them. There can never be Truth where there is no courage. To do wrong is sin ; but to hide the wrong is a greater sin. He who admits his misdeed with a pure heart has his sin washed off, and he can travel once more by the straight path. But he who hides his misdeed out of a false sense of shame falls into a deeper pit. We have seen this to be true every time, and hence I request all of you to avoid a false sense of shame. If you have done wrong, whether knowingly or unknowingly, announce it at once and make a resolve not to do it again.

Day of Silence Blessings from Bapu

66

15-4-'29

Dear Sisters,

I have no time to write much today. I request you to maintain and further the cause of our Mandir.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

67

22-4-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today we are in a village devoid of all conveniences. So I shall have to write my mail early ; it will then go to a Post Office eight miles from here. There is a lot of discomfort here, but with it plenty of new experiences. I continue to make money through collections.

You know that women here * are very clever in spinning. Khadi is more in use among women here than in Gujarat. There is no purdah, or false modesty. As a result they are strong in body and also work very hard.

They have presented to me plenty of jewels. Many give their rings, some their bangles, and a few their necklaces. I must have collected about a lakh of rupees till now.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

* Gandhiji was touring in Andhra Desha.

68

29-4-'29

Chi. Gangabehn Zaveri,

Please regard this letter as meant also for the other Ashram sisters.

You and Vasumati have shouldered the burden of the women's section. I find this is more due to your affection for me than to your own desire or physical ability to work. Even so it is good. May God give you the needed desire and strength. But if you do not have them, do not attempt anything beyond your capacity.

The whole Ashram is passing through a crisis. That includes the women. I have written to Chhaganlal to say that those who want to stay separate can do so. We shall have to think out what we should do in the case of women who have no male members to be with them. All of you think over the matter. No rule can apply to those who leave the Ashram or the Mandir. In regard to them I risk the suggestion that they merely stay as tenants. I do not see any other remedy. It is not right to relax any of the rules. A tenant can stay on as long as it suits him or her and the landlord. I do not know whether any of our sisters want to be placed in such a position ; nor have I been able to decide whether we should run the risk of keeping them in such a state even if they were willing. But all of you are there ; so please give careful thought to this question.

Blessings from Bapu

69

Rejol,
6-5-'29

Dear Sisters,

I am writing this from a village which is far from the railway. Wherever you wish to go from the village, you have to cross a river. There is no bridge, and therefore the village is like an island. When the river is in flood, it brings silt with it and deposits it round about. The land here is therefore very fertile and people are fairly well off. The temptation to collect money has brought me here. And I am getting money too.

A lady named Durgabai has been touring with us from Coconada. Her husband earns Rs 4000/- a year ; the lady spends about Rs 2000/- a year from it on running a woman's school. She herself teaches Hindi and spinning in the school. About 80 girls know Hindi. The lady is kind and industrious. I feel that she has faith in the work but not much knowledge. She cannot be said to know Hindi well. Her spinning also is rather mediocre. She complains that she has no one to guide or help her in Coconada. Consequently I feel that her talents are not being fully used.

Blessings from Bapu

70

Nellore,
13-5-'29

Dear Sisters,

There are just a few days left now for us to meet. It is getting hotter here day by day, as there, but I do not feel it much. I am glad that you are carrying on with perseverance the prayer-classes, the kinder-garten and the kitchen. They are imperfect, and may ever remain so. It is enough if we remain vigilant and go on making improvements in them. Even with our efforts to keep them running, improvements are bound to take place. All of you should learn, with proper understanding of their meaning, the verses usually recited at the women's prayer-meetings.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

71

Kurnool,
20-5-'29

Dear Sisters,

I expect this is my last letter to you from my travels. Next Monday, instead of my letter, I myself shall start from Bombay for the Ashram.

People here have given me immense peace. No crowds stood outside for having a sight of me. Till now, I have not been able to escape the crowds even on Mondays. Hot winds blow outside but owing to the wet *khas khas* curtains that are hung up, it is cool inside. If I complain of discomfort in travel after experiencing so much love and attention, I should indeed be most ungrateful.

Who can explain to the women here who put on six or seven earrings in an equal number of holes in the ears, three rings in the nose, and a ring round each of the fingers and on their toes, that there is nothing beautiful in all this ?

Even some of the educated women wear such ornaments. Whenever I see such women with jewels on them, I think of you all, and feel delighted that you have been freed from this love of finery.

Day of Silence Blessings from Bapu

72

Nainital,
17-6-'29

Dear Sisters,

Your responsibilities are going on increasing. I send herewith a letter from Kishorlal regarding an 'Ideal Kindergarten'. Read it and pass it on to the teachers there. I wish that those of you who have interest in the work would get well trained for it. Learn even at the cost of causing trouble to Narayandas. It is possible to have a more capable teacher than he. But it is always well to cling to one support.

You will of course make the kitchen attractive.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

73

9-9-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today I have to work in connection with the Gujarati *Navajivan*, Hindi *Navajivan* and *Young India* and time is short. Please, therefore, excuse me if I am brief. Though I am here, regard me as in your midst. All of you should live together as one. Help one another and bring credit to yourselves and the Mandir.

Blessings from Bapu

74

Bhopal,
16-9-'29

Dear Sisters,

Do not expect long letters from me for the present. I have very little time left on Mondays, because I have to finish my work on both the *Navajivans* on that day. I shall see how things work out as my travelling progresses. We are here only for a few days. Yet Mirabehn has opened a spinning and carding class. Jamnabehn has brought clothes made by the womenfolk of Bombay, and sells them here. Prabhavati helps her. Kusum remains fully occupied with her work. I may be said to be in good health. But I get very irritated if any of our people makes a mistake. From that I conclude that my body is not as I would like it to be, and that my mind has not grown so distinct from the body that it has control over the latter whatever the latter's condition.

Day of Silence   Blessings from Bapu

75

Kanpur,
23-9-'29

Dear Sisters,

Received a letter written by Gangabehn on your behalf. It is good that Valjibhai is taking the class in my absence. Take full advantage of his learning. I cannot give what he can. So when at present he is able to spare more time for you, get the most out of his knowledge.

Lakshmibehn must have arrived there by now. One can understand why Ramabehn and Dahibehn are unable to attend the prayers. Devotedness to duty is itself prayer. We attend prayers in order to attain fitness for doing actual service. But when one is engaged in actual practice of duty, it is the same as praying. If one who is engaged in deep prayer, hears the scream of another who is stung by a scorpion, one is bound to leave off the prayer and run to help him. Prayer finds fulfilment in service of the distressed.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

76

Lucknow,
30-9-'29

Dear Sisters,

Lucknow may be regarded as the centre of the purdah system. There are many Muslim women here. They inquired of me how their miseries can come to an end. What reply could I give to them but one, viz. that we forge our own bonds? Only yesterday we had a meeting of these women. Nobody had compelled them to put on purdah, and yet they all imagined that they could not do without it. The Ashram is meant to be a means for removing such shackles, and you hold in your hands its key. If breaking such shackles, and observing the rules of modesty you obtain knowledge and become devoted to service, you will serve as examples to other women.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

77

Gorakhpur,
7-10-'29

Dear Sisters,

I keep thinking of you often. As I see women and their condition during my travels, I think of the enormous work before you, and feel sure that real education is of the heart. If there is pure love in the heart, everything else follows automatically. The field of service is unlimited. Our capacity for service also can become unlimited, as there is no limit to the capacity of the spirit. If the gates of the heart are open, everything can get into it. Even a little service by such people bears immense fruit. But service by one whose heart is sealed to others will amount to nothing. This is the meaning to be drawn from the offering of a mere vegetable on the part of Vidura, and the offering of the choicest dishes by Duryodhana.*

Blessings from Bapu

* Vidura was a step-brother of King Dhritarashtra of Hastinapura. He was a great devotee of God Krishna and hence was hated by the King and his evil-minded son Duryodhana. When God Krishna once went to Hastinapura to intercede on behalf of the Pandavas in the fratricidal quarrel between them and the evil-minded Princes, he stayed as a guest of Vidura, though Vidura was so poor that he could offer him only one vegetable for his meals, while Duryodhana, the Prince, could have offered him right royal dishes — Translator.

78

Hardwar,
14-10-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today we are near the source of the Ganga. It is from very near here that the Ganga enters the plains. Going further up we would get to the hills.

Today being my day of silence, Kusum, Prabhavati and Kanti have gone out with Devadas for sightseeing. Nature is bountiful here, but man has spoiled every place.

Today this much should suffice.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

79

Mussooree,
21-10-'29

Dear Sisters,

Mussooree is a place where there is no end to pleasure-seeking. There is no purdah here. Wealthy ladies spend their time in dancing, painting their lips, beautifying themselves in all sorts of ways, and in blindly imitating the harmful ways of the West. Ours is the middle course. We wish neither to maintain blind orthodoxy and the purdah, nor to foster shamelessness and self-indulgence. This middle course is straight, but difficult. Our aim is to pursue and keep steadfastly to it.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

80

Meerut,
28-10-'29

Dear Sisters,

Today we are in Kripalaniji's Ashram at Meerut. So I get to see our Ashram atmosphere here.

I write to you today regarding our common kitchen. Diwali has come round. I have already received several letters. I write this to remove your misgivings. You have obtained experience for a year. For a year you have shouldered the burden. I have taken very little part in running the kitchen ; so my opinion has no real value. It is your opinions that should really count. Therefore, I will readily accept whatever decision all of you arrive at. My advice is only this : Do not discuss much ; do not waste much time over it ; after necessary discussion come to a quick decision. And then stick to your decision. Only thus progress is possible. Arguments for and against there will always be. Sometimes we may even make a mistake in coming to a decision. But do not worry on that score.

It is very necessary to form the habit of coming to a decision, and then adhering to it steadfastly. Of course it is a different matter if we later find that that decision was sinful. One may never tolerate a decision involving sin.

Blessings from Bapu

81

Aligarh,
4-11-'29

Dear Sisters,

Do not expect long letters from me for the present. May the New Year bring happiness to all.

That Kalavati's jewels disappeared is a matter of shame for us. But I do not sympathize with Kalavati. He or she who keeps jewels or other precious things in the Ashram is untrue to the Ashram, and should not feel grieved if they are stolen. Let us take a warning from this incident and search our boxes and bags to see that there is nothing valuable in them. Everybody must have full faith that he or she can get back whenever desired, anything kept in deposit in the Ashram.

It is good that you have framed a definite rule in regard to the kitchen. Hereafter there should be no further discussion about it, and any family that obtains permission to cook separately may do so. None should envy them for this.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

82

Shahjahanpur,
11-11-'29

Dear Sisters,

After this I have only one more Monday left to write to you.

It is being clearly proved that thefts in our Ashram are due merely to our carelessness. Carelessness is of two kinds. Firstly we are not vigilant, and secondly in spite of warning some do keep either money or ornaments with them.

Thieves there will of course be in the world. There are three ways of guarding against them: (1) We should not keep anything with us. But this is a counsel of perfection. (2) If we keep anything with us, to that extent we should be vigilant. (3) We should frighten away the thief by fear of punishment by the Government, and we too should join in punishing him. We have turned away from this third type of remedy. The first one is to be our ideal. The second one we have been already putting into practice — keeping as little as possible, and being extremely vigilant in regard to what it is absolutely necessary to keep with us. It is here as I pointed out that we are generally negligent.

This letter is practically of common interest to all. So let it be read at the evening prayers.

Do not be afraid of the burden of kitchen-work. Ask for whatever help you require, but never lose heart. We may not undertake a piece of work, but

once having undertaken it, we must stick to it to the last. God always helps those who work steadfastly in this spirit. That is the lesson to be learnt from the anecdotes of Gajendramoksha † and the devotional song of the male and female tortoises. ‡

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

† This refers to the following story from *Bhagawat*:

An elephant once went to a lake for drinking water. A huge alligator caught hold of his leg and began to drag him inside the water. The elephant could not resist the alligator's great strength. When the elephant was on the point of being drowned, he prayed to Lord Vishnu, who came to his rescue and saved him — Translator.

‡ This refers to another such story:

A male and female tortoise were caught by a hunter who cast them into boiling water for the purpose of cooking them. Being great devotees of Lord Vishnu they prayed to him for rescue. God Vishnu sent rain, the water thus became cool and the tortoises were saved — Translator.

83

Prayag (Allahabad),
18-11-'29

Dear Sisters,

I jot down here a thought that occurred to me from Santok's operation. In India women hesitate to allow their bodies to be examined by a male doctor. This is not good. We have suffered a great deal due to this false prejudice. At the root of this sense of shame lies sex-obsession, not purity. I wish we can get rid of this false prejudice. If Dr. Haribhai had not been allowed to operate upon Santok's body, her life would have been in danger. No woman should hesitate to allow her body to be examined by a male doctor. There can be no reason for fear since after all some relation or other is bound to be with the patient. Perhaps you do not know that I had engaged a male doctor at the time of Ba's last confinement. She was also once operated on by a male doctor. Ba did not lose anything by this. In regard to such matters, we have to change our ideas. Therefore it is, that I have put this before you. If you desire to ask me anything, do so on Tuesday the 26th.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

84

Wardha,
9-12-'29

Dear Sisters,

In the great hustle when I was with you this time, I missed speaking to you on two subjects. For one subject, there was no time left after it came to my notice. The second subject I entirely forgot to discuss with you.

I will take the second topic first. Our women do not allow male doctors to examine their bodies or to operate upon them. This is a false sense of shame rooted in sex-obsession. In this matter I prefer the practice of the West. I do know that at times undesirable consequences have resulted out of it. Wicked doctors and simple passionate women having come together, they have fallen a prey to immoral acts. But that happens in this world practically under every other kind of circumstance also, and there is no reason why on that account necessary and good activities should be put a stop to. We must have faith in ourselves. Therefore, I very much appreciated Santok allowing herself to be operated upon by Dr. Haribhai, and my opinion that Santok is brave has now become strengthened. In Phoenix we had made such practice common. A male doctor was engaged when Devadas was born. Ba had womb trouble and had to be operated. It was done by this male doctor. Ba is very brave and simple in such matters. Of course she insists on my presence at such times. But this is a matter of detail. Every one must have some trustworthy person by her side on such occasions, and

this is but right. My purpose in writing so much on this subject is that in our Ashram we should develop such courage and lay aside a false sense of shame. Hundreds and thousands of women suffer terribly due to such false shame. We have Vidyavati's example before us. She was not willing to get herself examined even by a woman doctor. We need to develop the innocence of Shukadevji.* As long as we have not developed it, we should not pretend to possess it. There are men who get passionate by merely touching women. There are women who become so likewise by a mere touch of men. Such persons should keep aloof perforce, even if they suffer from illness. I merely suggest that false shame should be abandoned. Those who are afraid of getting passionate by a mere touch should admit the fact candidly and restrain themselves. Such a passionate nature is a kind of disease, and persons of this type should avoid the touch of another man or woman. The disease is likely to disappear in course of time.

Try to understand the import of this part of the letter even by reading it several times. If you do not understand, ask me ; or you may ask Valjibhai ; he too will be able to explain. After all, it is simple enough.

The second point of my letter arises from Umiya's wedding. As soon as Umiya was married, she wore ornaments on her nose and ears. I did not like this at all ; the giver and the receiver were both at fault. What happened was contrary to the principles of the Ashram. Umiya could have put on the ornaments

* According to the Mahabharata, he was a son of Vyasa, and a very strict observer of continence — Translator.

after going to her husband's place. But the poor girl could not wait. I do not write this to give vent to my sorrow, but to teach you a lesson. Let no other girl imitate Umiya. Poor Umiya received very little training in the Ashram. Jaysukhlal (her father) too has not bestowed sufficient attention to the matter. Her mother is very simple and observes tradition, not knowing whether it is good or bad. She should, therefore, be forgiven.

I have advised both Umiya and her husband to be on their guard. The husband has not given her anything but a small bracelet. I have mentioned this matter just in order that no girl or woman knowing the ways of the Ashram may do such a thing in the future. I wish to draw another moral too from this incident. It is lustful men that have degraded women and taught them ways, i.e. fineries and ornaments, whereby women may excite men. Woman did not see in this her own slavery. She also harboured lust, and so she bored her nose, bored her ears and put on shackles (in the form of ornaments) on her feet and became a slave. A lustful man can easily tempt a woman now with a nose-ring or a earring. I have never been able to understand why women put on these things that lead to their degradation. Real beauty of course lies in the heart. May every woman in the Ashram be freed from love of external beauty, and getting their noses bored. Is it not enough that we bore the noses of animals? It is six o'clock now and I stop. I remember you so early in the morning, since I have to get much out of you.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

85

Wardha,
16-12-'29

Dear Sisters,

I wrote to you to my heart's content last time and so I shall be very brief today. I have still to write many letters and time is already over. I go on writing on many matters, but you take what you can digest and leave off the rest. Try to put into practice completely what you understand and accept.

Day of Silence

Blessings from Bapu

86

Delhi,
23-12-'29

Dear Sisters,

I am writing this from Delhi soon after morning prayers. The cold is so severe that Mirabehn's legs have become stiff. She has got into her bed, and is lying near me. Of course Lahore is colder even than Delhi.

But I do not wish to write to you about the cold. I have to write to you about our duties. For the present it is enough for me to state that those who are selfish will surely suffer a fall. Those who are devoted to their duties have no time even to fall. I have always found that it is only those who are averse to Truth that fall. A sinful act needs secrecy. It is generally done in secrecy. We do find persons who have abandoned all sense of shame and act sinfully even openly. There are others who regard sin as a merit. We do not talk at present of such persons. Most of our good activities fail because of the selfishness referred to above. In this selfishness lies the danger of our fall and the fall of society also. Think deeply over this, and each of you examine your life from this standpoint.

Blessings from Bapu

87

Lahore,
30-12-'29

Dear Sisters,

I write this merely to show that I am thinking of you today, my day of silence. I hope to reach there on the 5th. It is pretty cold. I am sitting in a meeting and there is noise all round me. So I shall not attempt to write more.

Day of Silence — Blessings from Bapu

APPENDIX I

MANIBEHN'S NOTES

[Notes taken by Smt. Manibehn Patel at Gandhiji's 7 o'clock prayer-meetings for women at his Ashram during 1926]

The first three verses that were always recited at the beginning of the seven o'clock morning prayers for women contain the moving prayer that Draupadi offered to Shri Krishna when the clothes she was wearing were pulled away from her person in Duryodhan's court. The following are those verses : *

गोविन्द, द्वारिकावासिन्, कृष्ण, गोपीजनप्रिय ।
कौरवैः परिभूतां मां किं न जानासि केशव ।।
हे नाथ, हे रमानाथ, व्रजनाथार्तिनाशन ।
कौरवार्णव-मग्नां मां उद्धरस्व जनार्दन ।।
कृष्ण, कृष्ण, महायोगिन्, विश्वात्मन्, विश्वभावन ।
प्रपन्नां पाहि गोविन्द, कुरुमध्येऽवसीदतीम् ।।

Expounding the verses Bapu said : My ideal is this : A man should remain man and yet should become woman ; similarly a woman should remain woman and yet become man. This means that man should cultivate the gentleness and the discrimination of woman ; and woman should cast off her timidity and become brave.

It is often said that women are very jealous by nature, but this does not mean that men are free from this failing or that all women are jealous. Women have to stay indoors for all the twenty-four hours and

* For translation of these verses see p. 115.

therefore their jealousy becomes more conspicuous. That is all.

*   *   *

My patience in teaching you will be endless. It will end only when your readiness to learn ends.

*   *   *

Both man and woman can become fearless. Man thinks that he can be fearless, but it is not always true; similarly woman thinks herself to be weak and allows herself to be called so; this too is not right. Women have no need at all to be full of fear. I will tell you what I heard about Mirabai the day before yesterday. Mirabai went to Vrindavan and knocked at the door of a *sadhu* (saint). The *sadhu* replied from inside that he never looked at a woman. Mirabai asked him, 'Who are you? I know only one man, and that is Shree Krishna.' On hearing this, the *sadhu* opened the doors, fell at the feet of Mirabai and said, 'You have opened my eyes today. I have been saved from an abyss.'

*   *   *

Man and woman are characterized by fear as long as both are subject to passions.

Draupadi showed as great strength as Yudhishthir did.

Draupadi had five husbands at one time and yet has been called 'chaste' (*sati*). This is because in that age, just as a man could marry several wives, a woman (in certain regions) could marry several husbands. The system of marriage changes with time and place.

But from another point of view, Draupadi is a symbol of the mind. And the five Pandavas are the five senses brought under its control. And it is indeed desirable that they are so controlled. Since all the five senses were under the control of the mind and had become refined, the mind (Draupadi) can be said to have wedded the five senses (Pandavas). The strength which Draupadi showed was immense. Even Bhima and Dharmaraja like Yudhishthira were afraid of her.

While in jail, as I read the prayer of Draupadi to Krishna at this time, as given in the Mahabharata, I wept bitterly. To my mind, this prayer of Draupadi has extraordinary strength in it. Countless people recite these verses in North India.

The power of words increases or decreases in proportion to the penance (voluntary self-suffering) underlying them. What is there in the word 'ॐ'? It is simply made up of three letters अ, उ and म. And yet its value lies in the penance associated with it. When there is greater penance behind the word, its value becomes greater. The same is the case with Draupadi. She may even be regarded as an imaginary character created by Vyasji. Such a woman may have existed or she may not have. But the great strength of Vyasji's penance and the recitation by crores of human beings of the prayers put into Draupadi's mouth by him, have raised the value of that prayer.

Govinda means the master of the senses; by Gopis are meant the thousands of sense-organs. 'Gopijanapriya' means one who is the beloved of the masses or say of the weak. Draupadi was surrounded by the Kauravas. The Kauravas are our evil desires.

Draupadi cries ‘O Keshava, how is it that you do not know me?’ It is the cry of all that are distressed. Do we not have evil desires? When are we free from passions? Draupadi says that she has been surrounded by Kauravas. Here ‘Kauravas’ may also mean wicked persons. But we are oppressed even more by our evil desires than by wicked persons. So it is better to interpret ‘Kauravas’ to mean evil desires.

Draupadi is a servant of God and as such she has the right to quarrel even with Him. She cries ‘Oh Master, Oh Lord, Oh Ramānath, i.e. Lakshmipati, i.e. Lord of the World, He who gives salvation, He who brings about self-realization, I am drowning in a sea of Kauravas, i.e. I am sinking in a multitude of wild desires; I am full of wicked passions. Save me.’

Draupadi calls out ‘Krishna, Krishna’. When a person is either in great joy or in great trouble, he or she thus calls out the name of God twice. She says, ‘I come to you for refuge; save me; I am beset with evil passions, and have become helpless. Help me overcome them.’

* * *

In Bombay there is a woman named Janakibai. In 1915 when I was staying with Revashankarbhai she came to see me. She boasted a great deal about herself. At that time I did not have any faith in her. Then when I went to Dwarka, she also was there. I made particular inquiries in regard to her; and found that she moved quite freely among the most wicked of men. Her idea was that she should be able to preserve her chastity even while living in the midst

of the worst men. And now all of them treat her with respect. She moves amongst them like a lioness.

* * *

We are helpless like Draupadi, because we are all full of impurities and evil desires of various kinds. Our fear of serpents and such like is a proof of our weakness. I am regarded as the highest in the Ashram, even then I, too, feel afraid. It means that I also am more helpless than Draupadi.

Dwarka means the whole world, or we ourselves, not the dirty little town near Porbandar in Kathiawad.

* * *

What may women have done that even men like Tulsidas have used derogatory terms in regard to them ? Whether it was the fault of Tulsidas or of the times, the defect is nevertheless there. The ancient laws were made by men. Though these men were sages and seers they show a lack of knowledge of women. Strictly speaking, as between man and woman, neither should be regarded as superior or inferior. The place and functions of both are different, and God has placed limitations on both.

* * *

Only the self can raise the self ; the self is the help of the self. Only women can raise women. This requires sacrifice and hard work. It is true that women are more capable of sacrifice than men ; but the sacrifice must be intelligent. Today women merely toil on in a helpless condition like labourers.

It may be agreed that no one can save woman except herself. But it may be asked, 'Can she be self-supporting ? ' My heart says that she can. If she learns Satyagraha, she can be perfectly independent

and self-supporting. She will not have to feel dependent upon any one. This does not mean that she will not take any help from others. She will certainly. But if such help be not forthcoming she will not feel destitute. If we are detached, even while we use articles which we receive, we are self-dependent. In such a state, even though receiving help from all the world, we in fact never become dependent on any one. And if help is refused, we would say, it was good that it was not given, and will not get angry, nor blame anyone. This is called Satyagraha. It is not enough to think that we should be fearless. We should become fearless at heart. Casting off fear does not mean being indifferent to the world.

One should give up the idea that one is helpless. God is the Help of all. It is possible to throw the blame for the present sorry condition of women, on their husbands. But women should think how best they themselves can cast off their own weakness.

* * *

There can be only one prayer for us all. If we offer this prayer daily, understanding it properly, it will get embedded in our minds. Keshava (God) is always with us. He is not in some Dwarka. That is only the language of the poet. Draupadi forgot that Keshava was with her. He clothed her body again and again remaining beside her. Whenever evil thoughts or evil desires spring in our mind, we should think of these verses of prayer.

* * *

[After Bapu had explained the meaning of these verses of Draupadi that used to be recited at the women's prayers in the Ashram, he had *Hind*

Swaraj *, read to them for a few days. In the course of his comments on the book he said :]

This is not a mere political book. I have used the language of politics, but I have really tried to deal with spiritual matters. What is the meaning of 'Hind Swaraj'? It means Rule of Religion or Rama-rajya (Kingdom of God). I have addressed as many meetings of women as of men. At women's meetings I have always used the words Rama-rajya in the place of Swarajya.

This book is the gist of my thinking for several years. Just as one cannot help speaking out when one's heart is full, so also I have been unable to restrain myself from writing the book since my heart was full. The book is meant mainly for the illiterate masses.

* * *

Whatever character we have inherited from our parents is our real inheritance. It may be said to be our spiritual inheritance, and it is our duty to add to it. If a father leaves an inheritance of a hundred thousand, and the son increases it to a million and then says "What kind of man was my father that he collected only a hundred thousand and how clever I am that I amassed a million ? ", he is a wicked son ; there is pride in what he says. We do not wish to add to money inherited from our parents, but to character, to our spiritual inheritance, and we should not feel proud about it for spiritual inheritance is not possible without humility.

* * *

* Written by Gandhiji in 1908.

In abstaining from a thing we are never used to from birth — for example, meat-eating — we make no sacrifice. Such a thing is quite natural for us, and we perform no heroic act thereby.

* * *

Man's beauty is in his character, that of a beast in its bodily form. In the case of a cow, for instance, we may say how good it is because of its skin, or hair, or feet, or horns ; in the case of a man, on the other hand, we do not say that he is good, because he is five feet and a half, and bad because he is four feet and a half, and better if he is an inch more than five and a half feet. The basis of goodness or badness in the case of man lies in his heart, not in the body or even in accumulated wealth. Here in the Ashram, we have regarded it our moral duty to build up the virtues of the heart. We eat and drink, and construct buildings of sand and mortar. That is because we have to do these things. We have not despised mud-huts, but we should indeed feel ashamed to live in luxury. We should bury our heads in shame if we add to our wealth. Indeed, we may possess wealth for service; we have to accumulate such wealth, much against our will. But some people accumulate wealth, regarding their greed as their religion. This is not proper. In proportion as we make our outer life more and more elaborate, we harm our moral progress, and we injure true religion.

* * *

Our merchants earn crores of rupees in Bombay markets. That is no cause for delight to us. It is rather a matter for regret. Because when a Bombay merchant earns five crores by way of brokerage, the Britisher gets ninety-five crores and that too he takes

away from the country through bleeding the poor man white. We do not realize this, because after all it takes time to bleed a nation of thirty-three crores of people.

* * *

[Once Bapu thus spoke about bodily labour :]

If a labourer does all his work dedicating it to God, then thereby he can attain self-realization. Self-realization means purity of self. Strictly speaking, only those who do bodily labour get self-realization ; because 'God is the strength of the weak'. By 'weak' is not meant 'weak in body', though for them also their strength is God — but we should take it to mean weak in means and materials. The labourer must cultivate humility, for mere developing of intelligence may lead to the development of a devilish kind of intelligence. By doing merely intellectual work, we develop devilish tendencies. It is, therefore, that the Gita says that one who eats without labour eats stolen food. Humility is inherent in labour. And that is why it is Karmayoga, or activity that leads to salvation. Doing physical work simply for getting money is no Karmayoga, since the idea is simply to earn money. Cleaning of latrines for earning money is no *yajna* (sacrifice). But the same act, if done by way of service, for the sake of sanitation and for the good of others, becomes *yajna*. One who does bodily labour out of a spirit of service, in all humility and for self-realization, gets self-realization. Such a one should never feel reluctant to work. He should ever be tireless.

* * *

How can the pot call the kettle black when both are of practically the same colour ? In the same way

what can man say to woman or how can he criticize her ? If numerous suspicions, doubts, passions and fears characterize women, they exist also in men. Some *pandits* say that woman cannot attain salvation. But as I see it, that is not so. The Vaishnavas believe that there has not been a greater devotee than Mirabai. My view is that if Mirabai cannot get salvation, no man can ever get it.

* * *

The farmer sleeps in the field. Are you or the British officer ever likely to sleep there ? But who cares for the poor man's feelings ? What joy does he get out of life ? He has to work in the field from early morning. So he also spreads out his bed there. He often dies of snake-bite. But the farmer leads such a life by compulsion. If it is at all called sacrifice on his part, it is sacrifice forced on him. It is not as though he refuses to travel by train ; if someone provides him with an opportunity to do so, he would immediately travel. But if he leads his particular kind of life deliberately, his life would indeed be blessed. Some sages lead a life like this farmer, or even duller. But in their case they have taken to such life voluntarily.

* * *

I would worship an idol even made of clay, if thereby my mind becomes lighter. If my life becomes fruitful, then only the worship of young Krishna's idol has meaning. The stone is no God ; but God resides in the stone. If I besmear the idol with sandle-wood paste, make an offering of rice, and pray to it for strength to cut off so many heads, one of you should throw the idol into a deep well, or break it into pieces.

* * *

If we wish to develop in us the capacity to look on all as equals, we should aim at getting only what the rest of the world gets. Thus if the whole world gets milk, we may also have it. We may pray to God and say, " O God, if you wish me to have milk, give it first to the rest of the world." But who can pray thus ? Only he who has so much sympathy for others and who labours for their good. Even if we cannot practise this principle, we must at least understand and appreciate it. For the present, our only prayer to God should be that since we are fallen so low He may accept whatever little we do, and that even if we do not progress in this direction. He should give us strength to lessen our possessions. If we repent of our sins, they will not increase further. We should not keep anything with us thinking it as our own, but should strive to give up as much of our possessions as we can.

* * *

If man needs the help of the whole world before he can follow Truth and Non-violence, then he would indeed become dependent. But God has arranged things so beautifully, that even if the whole world is against him, he can still follow Truth and Non-violence himself. If we do not wish to quarrel, the other person can certainly not quarrel with us. In the end he will get tired and be quiet. On the other hand, by giving an angry reply or by getting angry, we increase anger. It is like adding fuel to the fire.

* * *

How can he rise, in whose mind there is never any problem ?

* * *

From the fact that so and so committed suicide,

we should learn that we should not allow sorrow or troubles to prey constantly upon our minds. We should not brood over them. If we have felt hurt by some one we should tell him so straight off. Then the pain will not remain in our hearts. Even brooding sorrowfully within oneself is a kind of suicide.

How far is self-condemnation desirable? In a way it is good to remain dissatisfied with one's self. But such dissatisfaction should not go beyond limits. If a man's dissatisfaction is within limits he will rise. But if needlessly he always goes on finding fault with himself, and says, I am not able to do this or that, then actually also he will not be able to do anything and will become a fool. We should maintain a kind of confidence in ourselves and at the same time a certain discontent also. Then only can we rise.

The body is sometimes called a precious gift. If we remain devoted to God, it will really prove to be a precious possession. But to become wholly devoted to God, we have to control the body.

Man has to move about out of doors. His work is outside the house. So he does not quickly become despondent. But woman has to stay all the time inside the house. So she feels lonely and falls an easy prey to despondency. If she finds another woman to talk to, she becomes so talkative that she fails to discriminate between what she should say and what she should not. As she is always in the house she develops such defects. Of course, in a sense such loneliness is desirable. It saves her from many temptations. But loneliness is fruitful only if we learn to turn our eyes inward, search our hearts, and become self-introspective.

* * *

Suppose there is a woman who is entirely illiterate, yet remains devoted to her duties. She does not touch even a blade of grass that does not belong to her. She does not steal even in her dreams. If you ask her what Bhagavata is, she stares you in the face. But she loves every human being, as though she were the mother of all mankind. Suppose there is another woman, who knows everything, has all the Upanishads by heart, her pronunciation is excellent, but she steals, tells lies, and is clever in making others work for her, she is adept in almost everything. There is not the slightest doubt that the former is definitely superior to the latter. Of course if she learns reading and writing, she would be better still.

* * *

Of what use is knowledge in which there is no humility or tenderness ? Sage Kaushika became very angry when a bird dropped dirt on his body. The bird was consumed to ashes by his anger. The sage felt somewhat proud at the power of his penance. He then went to a house as a guest. The lady of the house was busy serving her husband, and so she kept him waiting. After she had finished her work she went to the sage with some food for him and stating the cause of her delay apologized to him. The sage got angry. The lady said, " I am not a bird that will be consumed by your anger ; besides, such anger cannot be called wisdom." The sage learnt a lesson and said, " You have given me two kinds of food today — food to eat and the food of wisdom."

* * *

A man who does the work that falls to his lot by the force of circumstances can remain unattached to it. He does not get false attachment for such work. Real

knowledge and true education can be had by devoted performance of one's duty.

*   *   *

We shall be surprised to see the various kinds of people that throng the hospitals. Doctors treat them, but it should be also their duty to teach them how to remain healthy. Hardly any doctor does this. Most of the doctors direct their patients along wrong ways of protecting the body. By doing this they harm man's character and bring deterioration to his soul. Besides, by caring only for the body they cannot do any real good to it.

*   *   *

To kill living animals and prepare serum from them, to learn to join up tissues by putting a stitch here and a stitch there, is this the work of a human being? It is the work of the devil.

*   *   *

Passionate desire is common both to man and woman. The mind of such a person always wanders about seeking an object of pleasure. But we must understand that we have obtained this birth not for enjoying or giving such pleasures, but for self-realization.

The marriage of Shiva and Parvati is regarded as an ideal marriage. She who wants to wed like Parvati should think of a man who is free from all passions like Shiva. It is not Parvati alone that was fated to get such a husband. Every woman holds that fate in her own hands.

In choosing a husband, we must not go by the kind of clothes he puts on, or the turban he wears. We must see how educated he is, and how good he is in character. Once you have decided to marry, marry

one who has good character, and whose mind is compatible with yours. If you find such a person, well and good; otherwise remain unmarried. One should not think of marrying anyone who comes along. Parvatiji had resolved that she would marry only one who was free from all passions like Shiva, otherwise she would remain unmarried. Every girl should cherish the ideal of Parvati.

* * *

Not to ride on another's back is also service. Not to accept service from another, and to develop an attitude of not making others work for one's self is also service.

Such is the world that if we put three stitches here, thirteen others give way there. Then how can we improve it? Real progress consists in recognizing Truth which exists within us as our Soul.

* * *

If you are good, the world is good. Bhagwan Patanjali has written that the desire for revenge disappears in the presence of non-violence. If we are ourselves slaves we regard everyone else as slaves also. In short, who wants to cheat an innocent man? One who tries to play false with such a person, will ultimately only hurt himself. If we do not retaliate, if we do not oppose the misdeeds of a wicked person, his misdeeds themselves will bring about his downfall. He will fall and then correct himself.

* * *

If we achieve Swaraj in our own Ashram, we would obtain Swaraj for the whole of India. It means we would all be true and straightforward. None of us would look upon another with suspicion. If we have no mutual distrust Swaraj is at our very door.

Swaraj means rule over one's own self, not over another. It means controlling one's self. He who has gained control over his sense organs, has obtained almost everything.

He who believes in punishment and violence has necessarily to resort to deceit. Deceit is a necessary accompaniment of such belief.

* * *

Our temple is in our Ashram, nay, it is in our hearts. A temple constructed of a few stones has no meaning. Only a temple raised in our hearts is useful.

If our Ashram goes on well like this, and does not produce any bad people within it, it would become a place for pilgrimage.

* * *

Every pebble on the bank of the Narmada is said to be Shiva. By the Narmada we do not mean only the river near Broach, but all rivers. If we wash clean a pebble on the bank of a river and offer a *billi-patra* * to it, the pebble becomes Shiva for us. Going a step further, if we take a lump of earth and mould it to the shape of a Shiva-idol, it also becomes Shiva for us. On going still further, we may think that Shiva resides in the hearts of us all. We are idol-worshippers as well as idol-breakers. We are the breakers of what is mere matter in the idol, but worshippers of the spirit within it.

* * *

I expect all the women in the Ashram not to do even a single piece of work without giving it proper thought. For this end, women should acquire know-

* The leaf of a tree regarded sacred by Hindus.

ledge. For the present, the women of India have become dull and lifeless.

* * *

A girl who wishes to remain unmarried should be wedded to independence. A girl dependent upon others can never remain unmarried.

* * *

Violence breeds violence. If we rob one, some one else is ready to rob us. There is a proverb in Gujarati which says that a lion has always somebody stronger than himself to cope with.

* * *

Just as when we do not know cooking, and yet prepare half-baked things and eat them we get indigestion, in the same way if we cannot understand what we read and yet go on reading, we shall get indigestion through reading.

* * *

Even the greatest are punished if they do things they ought not to do.

* * *

Devotees of God carry on activities dictated by their conscience. But conscience also may sometimes deceive. So devotees must always remain vigilant.

* * *

A person who utters a half-lie utters one lie and a half, because he deceives also his own mind; whereas a person who tells a deliberate lie knows in his mind that he is telling a lie. So he is not lying to himself.

* * *

Education of children mainly depends on mothers. Howsoever I may try to educate children

in the Ashram, my efforts will prove futile without the co-operation of mothers. We have to educate our children to be helpful to others. Even when a child goes to a teacher for studying, he takes with him a string attached to his mother's heart. He is always thinking when he can return to his mother. The mother draws the child to herself by means of this string.

We may read the Gita, or the Ramayana or the *Hind Swaraj*. But what we have to learn from them is desire for the welfare of others. We have to teach this to our children also.

* * *

Those forefathers of ours who gave up liquor did a manly and meritorious thing. But for us who have never drunk liquor, there is only a negative kind of merit in not drinking. We simply do not incur the sin of drinking — that is all. We may be said to have really given up drinking only when we understand all the evils that result from drinking (and therefore do not drink).

In the same way there is no meaning in our observing sacred days and vows without understanding their significance. Such observance becomes useful both to us and to society if we understand and can explain to others their significance. Our women observe Nagapanchami,* Janmashtami,† and other holy days. But they should understand their significance. It is possible that the meaning of Nagapanchami is that considering the serpent as a symbol of the enemy, it was sought through this means to inculcate the principle of not killing even

* A religious day dedicated to worship of Serpents.

† A festival celebrating the birth of Krishna.

one's enemies, but loving them. In this world, excepting man, there is no other creature so poisonous to man as a serpent. If we regard any one as so full of venom as a serpent, we should learn to love him, as though he were full of nectar. From doing this, we shall learn that every human being is worthy of worship, i.e. of service.

* * *

This world is held together by bonds of love. History does not record the day to day incidents of love and service. It only records incidents of conflict and wars. Actually, however, acts of love and service are much more common in this world than conflicts and quarrels. We find innumerable villages and towns flourishing in the world. If the world were always full of quarrel and discord, they could not possibly exist.

* * *

We must necessarily break those laws that violate the canons of morality. Not only should we not observe such laws, but we should even actively resist them. Now there are two ways of doing this — either through violence or through Satyagraha. We should follow only the path of Satyagraha. We cannot commit violence in the name of morality. We may allow ourselves to be hanged, or to be killed rather than kill others in the name of morality.

* * *

It is sometimes asked how women may preserve their chastity. It is suggested that for this women should carry daggers with them. If they do carry daggers with them, the daggers could of course be used against their own persons. Besides, one has to

be very hard-hearted to be able to wield a dagger. One would have to change one's whole mode of life, for a person who has never seen blood drawn, or drew blood himself, can never use a dagger. For being able to use a dagger, we shall have to take to hunting, we shall have to kill innumerable sheep, so hard shall we have to make our hearts in order to thrust a dagger through someone.

So instead of teaching women to use a dagger, it is better to teach them to be fearless. God's protecting hands are always over us. If we really believe in the existence of God, whom shall we fear ? Even if the most wicked of persons assaults you, take Ramanama (the name of God). Most wicked persons would run away at this earnest cry to God. But if that does not happen, what does it matter ? We should learn to die on such an occasion. If a child is on its death-bed, do we not almost kill ourselves in looking after it ? If even after the mother's greatest efforts, the child dies in her lap, she has the satisfaction that she did her best for it. It is our duty to be ever prepared thus to lay down our life. However wicked the man, if we die rather than yield to his physical strength, what after all can he do to us ? It is possible that a wicked man may give up his wickedness when faced with a pure-minded person, who is quite prepared to die. Thus Satyagraha is twice profitable. It benefits him who offers it and also him against whom it is offered.

APPENDIX II

VERSES RECITED AT THE WOMEN'S MEETINGS

गोविन्द, द्वारिकावासिन्, कृष्ण, गोपीजनप्रिय ।
कौरवैः परिभूतां मां किं न जानासि केशव ! ।।

O Govinda, O Krishna residing in Dwarka, O one beloved of all Gopis, how is it that you do not know that I am oppressed by Kauravas, i.e. wicked passions ?

हे नाथ ! हे रमानाथ ! व्रजनाथार्तिनाशन ।
कौरवार्णवमग्नां माम् उद्धरस्व जनार्दन ! ।।

O Lord, O husband of Ramā, O Lord of Vraja, the destroyer of all distresses, O Janardana, pull me out, who am plunged in the ocean of the Kauravas.

कृष्ण कृष्ण महायोगिन् विश्वात्मन् विश्वभावन ।
प्रपन्नां पाहि गोविन्द कुरुमध्येऽवसीदतीम् ।।

O Krishna, Krishna, O great sage, the Soul of the universe, the Creator of the universe, O Govinda, save me, seeking your help and drooping in the midst of the Kurus.

धर्मं चरत माऽधर्मं ; सत्यं वदत नानृतम् ।
दीर्घं पश्यत मा ह्रस्वं; परं पश्यत माऽपरम् ।।

Follow *dharma* (religion) and not *adharma* (irreligion) ; speak the truth, do not tell a lie ; be far-sighted, not short-sighted. Pitch your eyes high, not low.

अहिंसा सत्यम् अस्तेयम् शौचम् अिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
अेतं सामासिकं धर्मम् चातुर्वर्ण्येऽब्रवीन् मनुः ।।

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, observance of purity and control over senses — this is the duty of man, to whatever of the four castes he may belong, as laid down in brief by Manu.